













# Lord of the Rand

By Richard D. ...

EDWARD JESSUP:  
Ernest Oppenheimer  
A Study in Power  
357pp, Rex Collings, £12.95.  
0 86036 087 3

On the front page of *The Times* of February 13, 1980, appeared this headline: "Oppenheimer behind Gold Fields share moves". The report began, "Mr Harry Oppenheimer's South African-based Anglo-American mining group revealed yesterday that it was the buyer of shares in Consolidated Gold Fields, one of the United Kingdom's largest industrial and mining companies. The admission that the company holds just over 25 per cent which has cost more than £150 million ends almost three months of speculation at Gold Fields over who was buying the shares."

Consolidated Gold Fields were apparently not at all happy at getting such a powerful shareholder, although, as *The Times* pointed out, it came as a relief to find that the mystery buyer was not the Afrikaner group General Mining. That would have created too much political trouble from shareholders and outside groups opposed to the apartheid system.

The story in *The Times* reads like another chapter in Edward Jessup's workmanlike, though not very exciting, life of Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, the father of Harry and founder of Anglo-American. In spite of its name, Anglo-American is a South African company, which controls most of South Africa's gold and diamonds as well as a large share of its other minerals, and much of its manufacturing, property, banking, and retail trade. If you buy a beer in Johannesburg, the few cents profit is likely to go to Anglo-American.

The Oppenheimers originated in Friedberg, near Frankfurt-on-Main, where Ernest was born in 1880, the eighth of ten children of a cigar merchant, and one of thirty-four Oppenheimers among the town's Jewish population of fifty-seven. Soon after Ernest's birth, the German government began a campaign of persecution against the Jews, not as bad as the pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe but sufficiently harsh to cause the family to emigrate. The family moved to England and many of these entered the diamond trade, centred round Hatton Garden, which had been flourishing since the opening of the great mines at Kimberley in Southern Africa. Ernest was sixteen when he followed some of his other relations to London, where he began his apprenticeship as a cutter of diamonds, then went out to South Africa in 1902 to enter the diamond business at the production end.

Wags Ernest Oppenheimer got to Kimberley, where Rhodes had been dead nearly a year, and his mining empire already exerted a partial monopoly over the diamonds and also, though to a lesser extent, over the gold of the Witwatersrand. At Kimberley most of the mining houses were more or less connected with or controlled by De Beers, which was in turn to be swallowed up by Anglo-American.

The Oppenheimers were never great prospectors, having left to others the finding of diamonds in the Orange Free State or elsewhere. What is now Zambia, their genius has been in the raising of finance, the organization of syndicates or, as in their recent Gold Fields venture, the stealthy acquisition of other companies.

There was plenty of fun and adventure during the early years at Kimberley against the odds at Johannesburg about twenty years later when characters like Barney Barnato made and lost fortunes, shares soared and crashed, and champagne flowed in the primitive track excursions. The atmosphere of the two towns was marvellously caught in the early memoirs of Louis Cohen, now no longer in print. But after a few years the gold and diamond mining became a corporate business; the characters faded out, and the only excitement remaining was in secret

boardroom quarrels. In South Africa today decisions on whether or what to mine are taken by accountants. The fun has gone out of mining.

The Rand Lords, as people once nicknamed the gold and diamond millionaires, were drawn inevitably into politics, both in England and South Africa. During and after the Boer War, the Afrikaners claimed that the Rand Lords had provoked the war in order to smash the Transvaal Republic and their claims are proved to be justified in Thomas Pakenham's recent book, *The Boer War*.

As a German Jew, Ernest Oppenheimer was doubly unpopular. The loss of the Boer War strengthened the Afrikaners' inherent antisemitism; the white miners resented the usually Jewish owners and once smashed the offices of the Johannesburg Star (still part of the Anglo-American group); the cartoonists and the music-hall created a figure of J. Oppenheimer. During the 1920s, when the Afrikaners came to political power in an alliance with the Labour Party, Ernest Oppenheimer fought to resist the continual demands that he keep open uneconomic mines in order to find jobs for the poorer whites. This foreboded the still continuing struggle of Harry, his son, to abolish or modify "job reservation", the maintenance of a differential for white over black employees.

The Oppenheimers were and still are unpopular with the

Afrikaners—in spite of pretences on public occasions—yet during the First World War Ernest was also struck by the English-language newspapers because of his German name and origin. The attacks were revived when in 1920 *The London Gazette* announced that Ernest Oppenheimer had been created a Knight Bachelor and his brother Bernard a baronet for establishing a diamond polishing industry for disabled and discharged soldiers.

Not for the last time, a British Prime Minister, in this case Lloyd George, had aroused hostile comments by his choice of those he ennobled. This was not entirely a question of antisemitism. Although Queen Victoria had pronounced that "to make a Jew a peer is a step we cannot consent to", her son Prince Edward welcomed and later ennobled South African millionaires such as the Beits, the Albus and the Neumanns.

The scandal of the Lloyd George honours concerned the money paid for them. One South African millionaire, Joseph Robinson, was so disgusted that when the news leaked that he might be given a peerage, this had to be scaled down to a baronetcy. The author of this book does not go into the question whether Ernest Oppenheimer paid for his knighthood. Perhaps the question doesn't arise, for he amply fulfilled the qualifications once facetiously recommended to those who wanted to enter King Edward VII's set: "Get on. Get honest."

## The rough with the smooth

By Alden Whitman

RANDY ROBERTS:  
Jack Dempsey: The Manassa Mauler  
310pp, Louisiana State University Press, \$14.95.  
0 8071 0588 0

It was only in the 1920s that professional sports became socially respectable and commercially rewarding in the United States; as a byproduct, such prodigies as Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey, Big Bill Miller, Bobby Jones, Red Grange and Helen Wills Moody emerged as popular heroes, paragons of athletic prowess and success. They were taken up alike by the cream of society and its cards and whys. Therefore, only horse racing had enjoyed respectable social standing. It was the sport of the Vanderbilts, the Belmonts and the Jeromes, and shared by commoners. The two met and mingled, albeit gingerly, at the track but racing did not breed heroes who transcended the sport, probably because jockeys already lack the stature of Superman. Even Sanda came close, but that was in the 1920s.

Professional baseball, the sport chiefly of the lower-middle and the working classes, spawned many heroes before the 1920s, but the game lacked social cachet, and the heroes were not universal. Ty Cobb and Charles Mathewson, for all their superb ability and appeal, never crossed the threshold of the drawing room; their reputations were reserved for Babe Ruth.

Although boxing had a modicum of popularity up to the turn of the century, its social status was slight and its heroes—John L. Sullivan, James J. Corbett, Robert Fitzsimmons and James J. Jeffries—were perceived as little better than brawlers. Between 1904, when "Gentleman Jim" Jeffries retired as heavyweight champion, and 1919, when Jess Willard lost the belt to Jack Dempsey, boxing was down for the count and almost out. The title had passed to Jack Johnson, a wonderful black fighter, whose colour damned him, and whose uppity ways enraged the white trash that congregated around pugilists in those days. An outbreak of boxing was almost everywhere tolerated, a little bit, it stretched a living from among the lumps of the saloons and mining camps of the West and from among the lowlifers of the East. As late

as 1916, bouts at Madison Square Garden in New York, a showplace of the fight game, drew a crowd made up almost entirely of Jewish politicians and street toughs.

Yet by 1927, boxing reached a zenith of social acceptability, becoming so much the province of the swells that men were expected to appear at ringside in dinner dress and women in couture frocks and fur. About a hundred, or what was left of it, adopted boxing. The evidence of this *embourgeoisement* was the second Gene Tunney-Jack Dempsey bout, which took place at Soldier's Field, Chicago, in 1927. Leaders of government, industry, science, arts, society, business, princes and princesses of the blood, all were on hand to witness the action, which was broadcast by Graham McNamee, the era's premier announcer. *The New York Times*, that bellwether of bourgeois rectitude, assigned its best reporters to cover the event, printed it on page one. With a take of \$2,858,660, the fight was also one of the grandest commercial successes in sport of the decade.

The near-miraculous switchabout in boxing's status can be made comprehensible by examining the remarkable career of Jack Dempsey, the reigning heavyweight of the era; and that is precisely what Randy Roberts, a young sports historian at the University of Maryland, has attempted to do in this pathfinding book. It is a good start of a serious inquiry into the social history of professional sports and their role in class and community relationships; for these sports are at an intersection where ethnicity and class consciousness meet in interesting juxtapositions.

Born June 24, 1895, in Manassa, Colorado, William Harrison Dempsey had a rough childhood. An accomplished boxer who bathed his hands and face in beer being a gift from his father, he was given them a leathery texture, he lost his nose by battle and lived as a hobo for five years. It was a violent world in which he picked up eating money by betting on horse races. His method was simple but effective. Dr Roberts recounts, "Swearing into a western saloon, he would boldly announce, 'I can lick any sonofabitch in the house.' After hundreds of such fights in Nevada, Colorado and Utah, the shrewd, hard-punching youth began to practice his trade professionally in Salt Lake City."

From the outset, he was a crowd pleaser, which is to say he fought aggressively, often winning by knockout. His reputation grew. He

took on Jack as a first name, recalling for old-timers the middleweight fight Dempsey known as the Nonpareil. By a stroke of extraordinary luck, he formed an alliance with Doc Kearns, who was to be his manager for eight years. Diamond-studded and brash, Kearns gave the quiet, mild-mannered Dempsey the direction he needed: one in two years guided him to the very pinnacle, the heavyweight championship. With help, it must be recorded, from Tex Rickard, the flamboyant fight promoter and matchmaker, a man of surpassing self-assurance.

The pinnacle in 1919 was not notably Alpine. For one thing, the main distinction of Jess Willard, the beefy Kansas farmer who lost the title to Dempsey, was that he had been the "White Hope" who had taken the crown from Jack Johnson in an orgy of racism. For another, boxing itself was so outcast that the title bout had to be held in the undistinguished factory city of Toledo, Ohio.

Beginning in 1920, thanks in part to the exhortations of Dempsey and even more to those of the socially impeccable Anthony Drexel Biddle, a Philadelphia Main Liner and muscular Christian, boxing began to lose its stigma. Biddle's half-million dollar contribution to the Prohibition Society was turned to good account when a thousand telegrams from Protestant clergymen persuaded Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York in 1920 that he had nothing to lose politically by legalizing boxing in his state. Meanwhile, Dempsey, aided by appearances in the circus and the movies, was overcoming the abhorrence of draft-evaders and the scandal of an early marriage to a prostitute.

Then came two spectacular title fights, the first in 1921 against Georges Carpentier and the second two years later against Luis Firpo. They established Dempsey as a virtual superhero, while elevating boxing's social status. To attend a fight became chic; and in the three years between the Firpo slugfest and the greatest "fight" since, the Silurian Age, Dr Roberts dub it, and the first Tunney battle, Dempsey himself changed in response to social pressures. As Dr Roberts reports:

The rough mannerisms of the hungry western youth gave way to a rude but sincere sophistication of the "jardes" (the word for the rich man of leisure). The rugged features—facial scars and broken nose—were transformed and straightened. The loud, clenched-fist, head-butting style of boxing was replaced by the elegant, gliding, and graceful style of the modern boxer. The

dued. . . . If the savage is not tamed completely, he learned to pass invisibly into the public eye. His public image was fully cultivated, both by himself and the manipulators of the media. . . . the champion was always appear before the public as a kind, gentle and common man.

The payoff was an invitation to the White House, a moment of national glory when "the" Dempsey shook the hand of Chief Coolidge, positively gurgled on the occasion. Into the bargain, the champion became the clean, wholesome hero of several Hollywood films. Ruffed and polished by the flocks at Universal Studios, he was costumed by sports writers including Ring Lardner, who had any ironic detachment he might have harboured about him.

Losing his title to Tunney in 1927—a defeat confirmed by a "Soldier's Field" fight of 1928—Dempsey began to pass his life as a quietly affable and immensely curious pugilist outside the ring. He seemed to grow in popularity as his questionable boxing tactics were forgotten.

For many years in the 1920s he was accustomed to sit at a restaurant in the window of a Broadway restaurant that bore his name. I sat with him one night, and more than fifty people came by to press his hand and get his autograph. They all called him "Champ". He kept a smile on his face and a cheery word on his tongue as he accepted his bonhomie was assured.

As a biography of Jack Roberts's book is admirable. It tells the fighter's story with accuracy and verve; it faces up to his racism, his careful avoidance of Jack Johnson, the mighty black heavyweight of the Twenties, and to the artifice of Hollywood years. But Roberts sees through to Dempsey's dignity. As a social historian he is on the right track in tracing the path of boxing from deep saloon to the saloon, although he is less successful than one might wish.

Roberts is a winner on points until, in an epilogue, he gives us luck by adopting Gene Fowler's view of Dempsey as a metaphor for the 1920s. The fighter, it is said, reflected both the did not roar and the middle-class desire for a new addition. Roberts says, he manifested "the longing of every man to destroy the giant." This is simply a case of Roberts letting zeal run away with him. Dempsey stands very much on his feet without this embellishment.

## Candidates for the Dance

By Alan Bell

ANTHONY POWELL:  
*Faces in My Time*  
Volume 3 of *To Keep The Ball Rolling*  
230pp, Heinemann, £8.50.  
0 434 59924 7

*Faces in My Time* covers the period from the author's courtship and marriage in 1934 to the inauguration of a *Question of Uplifting* in 1951, a long stretch with miscellaneous literary work at either end, interrupted unforgettably by a war notably busy in military liaison duties. Much of the ground has already been covered, with the dancing transformations of fiction and the convenient rearrangement that the novel form allows, in the *Dance*. It is a difficult technical problem to traverse it again with freshness and originality, avoiding at far as possible the crude disavowal of more parallels. Fortunately, in his two previous volumes of autobiography Mr Powell adopted a deliberately loose structure and an easy discursiveness about his manner of proceeding. These new volumes often provided their knowledge readers with keys to the "originals" of the *Musical Time*, now the parallels are so frequent and obvious that a different approach is adopted, with the equivalent admitted and discussed with a subtle view of the techniques of transformation.

More important than the identification of individuals is the general congruity of tone. This is especially so when working out the relationship of the Pakenham family of the author's marriage to the Tolands of Mick Jenkins's *Mr Powell finds questions about his metamorphosis "redious to myself, but congenial to readers of novels"*, and emphasizes beyond the mere dramatic parallels (the Pakemans, ten Tolands) the similarities in "general tone" between the two families. Thus Edward Earl of Langford and "Alf" Erridge, Earl of Westminster, are not to be seen as counterparts in the details of their lives; but the separateness of their lives, from the rest of their families, is a more important feature than would have been mere transcriptions of similarities in politics, marriage and literary interests.

At Lady Mollie's captured very well the varied bustle of a large family, which is now seen in an autobiographical chapter devoted to the Pakemans. Both families are viewed with the specially keen eye of an only child admitted for the first time into a new family circle. From the relative outside the circle is reflected in early volumes of the *Dance* by Jenkins's lonely bying for his reliance on the attitudes and judgments of friends like Strangham and Moreland, keeping his own in reserve, he comes to the index. Mr Powell was too fully employed either to see much of Connolly or even to read his magazine.

Such literary effort as was possible was mainly channelled into a close reading of John Aubrey, undertaken even before the outbreak of war when recurrent crises domestic and international made novel-writing impossible, and now providing a solace as well as an occasional occupation. Jenkins likewise turned to Wood and Luttrell, who "opened up vistas of a past, if not necessarily preferable to one's own time, at least appreciably different, varying them with Proust, or more recently with Saltykov-Schedrin's *Golden Family*. Mr Powell's Aubrey work was to be completed soon afterwards; projects suggested by his own reading of Proust were to be longer in coming to fruition.

Techniques of observation newly refined by family circumstances were usefully applied to a wide range of military personalities, from the foreign attachés who people the novel up to Montgomery himself, already well portrayed in *The Affinity*. *Philosophers* but remark here before he has intervened into an exhibit, the immensely energetic mobile waxwork that his outward appearance seemed instantly to resemble after accomplishing the task appointed by history. It was a crowded as well as a busy time, and the author was glad to return to the isolation of the North Devon coast for his demobilization leave, to an area "all unpeopled, an emptiness greatly to be valued after wartime's unremitting contingencies."

A period of recruitment was necessary before literary work could be fully resumed; Aubrey helped to bridge the gap, and there was a spell of work on *The Times Literary Supplement*, when Sir Harry d'Avigdor-Goldsmid described an office party as "a gathering of the worst-paid workers in England."

The pre-war years are filled with more than a few family life. Work on *Philosophers* on film, for "the Opa" (described here with much interesting technical detail by no means to be brushed aside with a *Widenerpolian* "quite so") and later in Hollywood, has its literary as well as autobiographical interest. It was frustrating work, when treatment after treatment was rejected, the most ambitious—a film about Dr Barnado—perhaps still lying in Warner Brothers' vaults, awaiting "the last Trump, when all shelved treatments" came up for judgment before the Great Executive. In spite of these rejections, Mr Powell feels that the experience of trying to put across his scriptwriting ideas to opaque American cinema dignitaries "did teach me a lot about narrative construction, chiefly the necessity of 'establishing' early on in the story circumstances to be used at a later stage". It was a lesson of obvious importance for the novel sequence that before long was to start reemerging.

From the moment of the author's joining the Welch Regiment, in which his father had been a regular officer, we move into a period very closely geared to the three volumes of war novels, the strains of *Cwm Rhodri* a leitmotif in fact as well as fiction. There are constant echoes of the numerous bank-clerk officers bringing to mind their frustrations with the jammed locks of children's savings boxes, or the architectural parallels between Castlemaelock of the *Musical Time* and the Gosford Castle of a wartime Ulster posting (Osbert Lancaster having recaptured the appearance of both by sheer flair on the covers of the over-to-be-lamented Penguin reprints). There followed a whole series of Whitehall postings, a brief transfer to the exalted level of Cabinet Office committee work ("only after a series of ghastly humiliations does one begin to learn the extent of one's capabilities"), more extensively with Military Intelligence (Lancaster under the memorable Colonel L. Finn, VC, now revealed as an amalgam of a similarly decorated Edinburgh solicitor and another even more notable officer.

Pennistone is a rather underdeveloped character in the novel, nevertheless making a firm impression with his decently obscure background and by his reticent intellectuality, a man who is writing "something awfully boring about Descartes, really not worth discussing. . . . I feel quite ashamed about it." He turns out to have been based very largely on Alexander, Evelyn Waugh's brother-in-law, whose researches lay in Kierkegaard rather than Descartes, although Allick Drui's Anglo-French background and philosophical interests would have made the latter a particularly appropriate study. Mr Powell deploys Dr's character at considerable length, hinting at a brilliance and subtlety that are never adequately realized in Pennistone.

As one would expect from the novel, the "ar recorded in the autobiography is a military rather than a literary one, from the Fitzrovia world of other memoirs, every battle-dress pocket filled with *Penguin New Writing*. In spite of surrendries from Cyril Connolly, who urged him to write something "horrible" "just to get your name in the index" Mr Powell was too fully employed either to see much of Connolly or even to read his magazine.

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## Time's Metaphors

Four paw-marks filled with frozen water, white brush-strokes drawn on a dark kimono clutched against her hanches, bird-claw hieroglyphs: the last surviving hairs and this spring's thrusting buds enclosed by ice on the same frail twig.

Ruth Farnlight

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## The spoils of revolution

By Norman Stone

ROBERT C. WILLIAMS:  
Russian Art and American Money,  
1900-1940  
209pp. Harvard University Press,  
\$10.50.  
0 674 78122 8

This book concerns a minor but important current in the great tide that has swept so much European art over the Atlantic in the past hundred years. In the 1920s and 1930s, great quantities of Russian property, state or private, were sold off to American buyers (and, in the case of the *Codex Sinaiticus*, the British Museum). The high point of such selling occurred in 1930-31, when the multi-millionaire Andrew Mellon acquired twenty-one masterpieces of European art from the Hermitage collection. He paid \$6,654,053 for a set which included Rembrandt's "Polish Nobleman" and "Woman Holding a Pink Vase," Vermeer's "Finding of Moses," Velázquez's "Innocent X," the \$1,166,400 that he paid for Raphael's "Alba Madonna," and then the highest price ever paid for a single picture, and the Mellon sale alone made up one third of the value of Soviet exports to America in that year. In a similar deal the year before, Calouste Gulbenkian paid £120,000 for two Rembrandts, Ter Borch's "Music Lesson," Watteau's "Mezzetin," and Lancret's "Baigneuses." At the time, he admonished Pyatkov, with whom he had been negotiating the deal, "I have always held the opinion that the objects which have been in your museums for many years should not be sold... even to me."

It is difficult to disagree with that, and to this day the subject is seldom discussed in the Soviet Union. The Bolsheviks had always been respectful towards the Russian art collections: even when *Aurora* steamed up the Neva to strike at the Provisional Government in the Winter Palace, she fired blank shot to avoid harming the building. True, there was, early on, an almost Futurist strand in the Russian Revolution: some of the *Proletkult* people would quite happily have taken a flame-thrower to what they saw as a dead museum-culture. But their influence declined, like that of the radical feminists, as Stalin's rose; and though Stalin, like Lenin, was mainly indifferent to art, he could at least appreciate the propaganda value of it—whether of native Russian art, or of the great collections amassed by the Tsars (mainly Catherine the Great).

The Tsarist government had also, dimly, appreciated such propaganda value, and Robert Williams begins his story with an episode that will delight connoisseurs of government ineptitude. In 1904 the city of St Louis staged a centennial "Louisiana Purchase Exposition," for which international contributions were invited. The Russians cover photograph shows an amiable bearded old gentleman, a sort of good-natured Tolstoy, wearing a shaggy dressing gown and seated before several framed pictures, at his feet a portfolio of prints. This is George Lucas, an American collector who settled in Paris in 1857 and remained there until his death in 1909. Our appetites are further

were given little recognition by the prize-awarding bodies.

The Tsarist government had handed management of the affair to a Russian merchant, Gruzwald, who lost money, and tried to recoup his losses by selling the paintings at auction in New York. But the US Customs then demanded a tariff, from which the paintings had been exempted earlier on the grounds that they were only for display. Gruzwald could not pay this, and rashly gave power of attorney to a crooked Californian lawyer, Kowalski. After several years of part-Chuzzlewit, part-buzy legal and financial wrangling, the paintings were sold off, for about a tenth of their value: many have disappeared, and the others seem to be in the Oakland Art Museum. The artists do not seem to have had a penny from this, and in many cases they had not authorized the sale; but the Russian envoy in Washington, a Polish-Bah figure named Baron Rosen, would do nothing to help.

Just after the Russian Civil War, a great deal more Russian art arrived in the United States. Some of it came via galleries in Europe, where it had acquired refugee property, and some came directly from fleeing noblemen: Prince Yusupov emerged from the Crimea with two rolled-up Rembrandts which he sold to the Philadelphia businessman, Joseph Widener (another deal, legal warfare followed). The Soviet government also sold off icons, Fabergé, and furniture through the agency Antikvartir. In the early years there were exhibitions of Russian modern art—Larionov, Rodchenko, Chagall, Burliuk—mainly in a New York gallery with the splendidly Tzvetan name of Société Anonyme, the inevitable Isadora Duncan hovering vaguely around.

Robert Williams has traced some of the middlemen in all of this.

## Blind eyes in the market

By William Mostyn-Owen

LILIAN M. C. RANDALL:  
The Diary of George A. Lucas  
An American Art Agent in Paris  
1859-1909  
Volume 1: 316pp.  
Volume 2: 276pp.  
Guilford: Princeton University  
Press £22.50.  
0 691 03993 X

SAMUEL P. AVERY:  
The Diaries 1871-1882.  
936pp. New York: Arno. \$60.  
0 405 11517 2

To open the heavy package containing the two massive volumes of Lucas's memoirs fills the recipient with anticipatory excitement. The cover photograph shows an amiable bearded old gentleman, a sort of good-natured Tolstoy, wearing a shaggy dressing gown and seated before several framed pictures, at his feet a portfolio of prints. This is George Lucas, an American collector who settled in Paris in 1857 and remained there until his death in 1909. Our appetites are further

They were not an agreeable bunch. There was on talent but persistence, wormed his way into the confidence both of buyers and sellers, and specialized in a slushy kitch-Slavonic sales-talk. The painter Nicholas Roerich did the same on a very grand scale, his knowledge of Russian art was of course thorough, and he also proved adept at exploiting rich supporters' vulnerability to Theosophy. Madame Blavatsky, "the mysterious Orient and the like. A rich backer helped him to establish a gallery at 310 Riverside Drive, in which he sold paintings originally from the Soviet Union (it is not clear whether he acquired them directly from the Soviet government). These paintings fetched prices that were amazingly low: a *Madonna and Child* by the Russian painter, sold for \$3,500; Bosch's "Magi" for \$600; Altörfer's "Lucifer" for \$800. It all went to finance Roerich's expeditions in the Far East, an orgy of pretentiousness that, for a time, took in the Russian Administration before it all ended, as so many of the stories in this book do, in a sordid wrangle over tax-evolution.

It is not always easy to see what the Soviet side of this was. Some of the paintings (and of course a large amount of the furniture and Fabergé) came from confiscated private holdings; and there was a (justified) fear that their owners in the West would start legal proceedings if the pieces ever reached the West. Even in 1954, Madame Shchukina sued in the French courts to recover thirty-seven Picassos that the Soviet government had sent out for exhibition. Not surprisingly, the Soviet government preferred, in the 1920s, to operate covertly, usually falling through the German auction-houses: by 1931, the quest for foreign exchange to acquire Ger-

man machinery was such that in May the contents of the Straninov Palace were auctioned off in Berlin, for the derisory price, of \$600,000, which included \$10,000 for a Ruysdael "Haurim". It was through the Berlin Matthiesen Gallery that contact was made with Colnaghi's in London, and then with Knoedler's and Joseph Duveen in New York, for the great Hermitage sales to Mellon and Gulbenkian. After the affair was over, the head of the Matthiesen Gallery, Zatzewstein, complained that he had not been rewarded for his share in the deal. No one seems to have paid any attention to his complaint. The paintings involved have now ended up in museums, especially in Philadelphia and Washington, after the apparently standard, lengthy suits for tax-evolution.

One entrepreneur in the field of Russian art sales is still alive: Armand Hammer, whose fortune, now made up of oil, baking soda, cattle and whisky, owed its origin to a concession acquired by his family to operate a pencil factory in Russia in the 1920s. When the factory was taken over by the Soviet state, Hammer was able to gain compensation; he was allowed to export the very considerable store of Russian treasure that his family had built up. Later, it seems, the Soviet government (he had very good relations with Mikoyan) used him to sell further treasures (Fabergé, Romanov Crown Jewels) in the United States; yet again, the prices appear to be amazingly low, a small gold Easter Egg, for instance, made by Fabergé for the Tsaritsa, selling at \$450.

*Russian Art and American Money* 1900-1940 will cause deep revulsion. The American ambassador in 1937-38, at the time of the Great Purge, was Joseph E. Davies, a lawyer friend of Roosevelt's. Davies was notorious for

suggesting, almost alone among non-communist commentators, that the Purge really had been provoked by a genuine plot.

From Robert Williams's pages we can tell the background to this extraordinary assertion. Davies was married, as her third husband, to heiress Marjorie Post ("Jelly" Syrup, "Post Toasties") and had an enormous Russian collection. Davies was given every facility by the Stalin government to amass Russian treasures which had been extracted by force or fraud from their terrified owners, who sold them through the very Commission Shops. Davies and his wife were even allowed to pay for their things in black-market roubles worth only one-fiftieth of the official rate at which Davies bought. As a result, he acquired an amazing collection (now at the Elephant Museum of Art in Wisconsin) a sum that to him and his wife (who had five yachts, the most recent being the length of a football pitch) must have been a big deal—\$100,000. He spent only half of the time in Moscow that he meant to spend, and his famous remarks on Stalin have to be read in context. In March 1938, Marjorie was given, for her birthday, "a Fabergé topaz box set in gold and diamonds, a malachite set in lapis lazuli cigarette box, a Fabergé clock in pink enamel and gold."

Soviet sales of works of art, finance the country's industrialization, brought in 4,600,000 rubles in 1929, 6,300,000 in 1930, 2,700,000 in 1931, 1,900,000 in 1932. This is the depressing story told by Robert Williams has told. His book is based on a thorough search of American archives, but, perhaps inevitably, he cannot say much about the Soviet side. He does not draw a moral from his tale, but he tells it with conviction.

Complete Works of Washington Irving. Avery's diary makes him equally trivial and even more egotistical. The entries are almost exclusively reproduced in a format of twenty-two lines to the page, which cover 730 pages between 1871 and 1882. This is supplemented by a long introduction containing pretentious and uncritical judgments on the New York art market from the 1860s to the 1880s in which the editors' stated aim is that of "adding to the recognition of Avery's contribution to American artistic development." From Avery's auction catalogue they have about compiling a series of papers on "art-buying practices." These cover popularity of subjects in which "fancy still-life" is at the bottom of the league table and genre painting at the top; subjects in relation to average prices (head portraits bottom, oriental genre top); or occupations of buyers in relation to numbers of paintings bought (journalists at the bottom, dealers at the top); average prices in relation to occupation (lawyers paying most); and occupations of buyers in relation to numbers of American paintings (men in most port way ahead of the field).

It is useless to pretend that Lucas had any serious influence on the art world in Baltimore, or anywhere else for that matter. William Walters shared Lucas's taste; and it was only with his son Henry that the famous collection really took off. Lucas knew the younger Walters, but was never near enough to accompany him during some memorable purchases.

Similarly, Avery's clients (together with Walters) consisted of such New Yorkers as William Vanderbilt, John Taylor Johnston, William T. Blodgett and Joseph Fiske, none of whom was a collector of any significance to the newly founded Metropolitan Museum.

Both these books represent the unselective use of private support and Foundation grants. The fact that such support is tax-deductible makes it all the more imperative that grants are given to projects which will seriously contribute to our knowledge and understanding of the development of collecting in nineteenth-century America.

## A spectacle of suffering

By Phyllis Grosskurth

MICHAEL HOWELL and PETER FORD:  
The True History of the Elephant Man  
190pp. Allison and Busby. £6.95.  
0 85051 353 8

The story of Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man, is one to strike pity and terror into any heart—though to what degree it is likely to do so, is beyond my wisdom to say. Joseph's very existence raises the unanswerable problem of divine justice as well as evoking a multitude of possible human responses—outrage, disgust, magnanimity. The phenomenon and Elephant Man, Ashley Montagu's quasi-scientific study which he subtitled "A Study in Human Dignity" (1970), Bernard Pomeroy's play which has been a smash hit on Broadway and has been followed by a film, and now a more intensive investigation, *The True History of the Elephant Man*, by Michael Howell and Peter Ford—may be viewed as examples of civilized humanitarianism or as respectable excuses for indulging in primitive voyeurism. We are respectful of celebrating Merrick's dignity as a human being by all this interest, or should we not let the poor soul rest in peace?

Joseph Merrick was the most famous freak in history. His birth certificate records that he was born Joseph Carey Merrick on August 5, 1862, in Leicester, and that he was the son of Joseph Rockley Merrick, warehouseman, and Mary Jane Merrick. Since his parents were married on December 29, 1861, Howell and Ford conclude that his mother was pregnant at the time of his birth, but surely it is possible that the child was premature. And could the birth have been precipitated by the accident? Merrick always attributed his unusual appearance to his mother's terrifying experience of falling and stumbling while from the feet of a parading elephant. These huge beasts were an indispensable attraction of the circuses touring the provinces in nineteenth-century England. Rational judgment would dismiss the conception as preposterous, and Ford of folklore; but Howell and Ford cannot categorically deny that she might have had such an accident.

Joseph was born in the heart of the Industrial Revolution amid the filth and squalor and degradation of Victorian slums. Even if

he had been born reasonably healthy, well-formed, his life expectancy would not have been more than forty years, and his existence would have been one of grinding poverty; but to be malformed, grotesquely malformed, in such a world was a hell beyond comprehension.

In actual fact his mother did not notice anything remarkable about him until he was nearly two, when a firm swelling in his lower lip began to grow and spread as a hard tumour into his right cheek until the child's upper lip was pushed outwards by a mass of protruding flesh. Terrified and bewildered, she watched a bony lump appear on his forehead, his skin grow rough in texture, and one arm and both feet swell alarmingly. A perfectly normal boy and girl followed Joseph's birth, although the brother was to die within a few years.

Legend, following the opinion of the surgeon, Frederick Treves, who later became interested in Joseph's case, would have it that his mother heartlessly abandoned him to the workhouse, but Howell and Ford, through intensive research, have uncovered her firm handwriting in the marriage register with the cross which she signed her second son's death certificate and take this, I think rightly, as evidence of her agitated state at the time. Furthermore, Merrick always treasured her memory as beautiful and tender; and surely his own gentle, uncomplaining nature must have been formed in childhood when he experienced a mother's love, especially as she did not die until he was nearly eleven. "Her death," he recalled, was "the greatest misfortune of my life... peace be to her, she was a good mother to me."

His father then moved in with a widow whom he soon married. Joseph's life began to take on the quality of a nightmare as he became the butt of his stepmother's shrill abuse. His father sent him into the streets to beg, but with his increasingly bizarre appearance, people turned away from him in horror; and after a whipping from his father, he left home forever at the age of fifteen. An uncle, who took pity on him, brought him in from the streets, and for two years he lived in a state of relative tranquillity, although there was no remission in the advance of his distorting disease. The commissioners refused to renew his hawking licence and at seven-teen, aware that he could no longer

be a burden upon his uncle, he threw himself on the mercy of the parish, and presented himself at the doors of the workhouse.

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 had been intended to make conditions in the workhouse so intolerable that its inmates would prefer the slightly less hellish world of the streets, and Howell and Ford give a terrifying picture of life in the workhouse, a sojourn which Merrick was always to remember with a shudder as the worst period in a life that seemed to be cast in perpetual shadow.

After twelve weeks Joseph Merrick was so demoralized that he returned to the streets; but within two days, in desperation, he again sought the refuge of the workhouse. The reason for re-admission was reported as "No work." The ghastliness of the next four years is too terrible to contemplate. In addition to the expected vicissitudes, the rotundity of Merrick's jaw began to grow so alarmingly that it became difficult even to force food into his mouth and his speech was almost incomprehensible. He was then referred to the Leicester Infirmary where, he recalled, he was treated to undergo an operation on my face, having three or four ounces of flesh cut away." It was this particular aspect of his physiognomy which gained him the title of "the Elephant Man."

What hope, what future, what possibility lay open to this pitiful creature? One wonders how many times he turned his limitations over in his mind. There was no doubt that he was a freak, and with a

fortitude that characterized every action of his life he came to a stoical realization, not that he could capitalize on his infirmity, but that it offered him his only salvation. Accordingly, he wrote to one Sam Torr, a star of the music halls, offering himself for exhibition.

On this as on other occasions, Merrick's response was to accept a fate that would have seemed unbearable to most of his fellow men. A pariah, he had no recourse but to become a spectacle, put on display to satisfy the crudest voyeurism. His aspect was an appalling sight, the enterprising Torr saw its commercial appeal immediately. Torr also realized that even a monster could soon lose its novelty, so his captive had to be kept perpetually on the move following the circuit of the fair-grounds.

At this point another figure enters the story, an associate of Torr's by the name of Tom Norman, who was later to become a renowned impresario. Howell and Ford describe him grimly as "the nearest Joseph Merrick came to having a fair godfather"; and indeed he soon became a close friend, his charge with kindness. His role was that of catalyst—once he took Joseph to London, the story of the Elephant Man emerges from clouded memory to recorded fact.

In November 1884, while Norman was exhibiting him in an empty greengrocer's shop in the Mile End Road opposite the London Hospital, word of Merrick's extraordinary appearance reached the ears of Frederick Treves, a young surgeon

who was already beginning to establish himself as a notable innovative figure in the annals of medicine as well as one of London's most fashionable consultants. His curiosity piqued, Treves lifted the crude and garish poster of Merrick adorning the front of the shop, only to find an unexpectedly small figure huddled in a blanket before a gas burner. Treves's first impression of the unfortunate creature was that he seemed the very "embodiment of loneliness." When Norman shouted to Merrick to stand up, Treves, accustomed though he was to the horrors of the East End, was staggered, particularly by the peculiar odour emanating from Merrick's body. Regaining his composure, he began to take clinical notes, a lame-ness of the left hip; the head a misshapen mass of cauliflower-like growths; great bosses protruding from his forehead; spongy, fungous-looking skin; a bulbous inverted upper lip; and pendulous folds of skin hanging from chest and back. The only normal features of this monstrosity were a delicately formed left arm and hand and normal genitalia. "At no time," wrote Treves, "had I met with such a degraded or perverted version of a human being as this one figure displayed." As for the man himself, Treves recalled in a monograph he published in 1923, "he was shy, confused, not a little frightened and evidently much cowed. Moreover, his speech was unintelligible... I supposed that Merrick was an imbecile and had been an imbecile from birth."

Treves arranged for Merrick to go to the London Hospital, where

"I am nothing but a literary lizard, warming myself all day in the bright sun of beauty. That is all..."  
Letter to Louise Colet, 1846

Passionate, witty, analytical, and erotic, Flaubert's letters are a dazzling display of a writer's art and life.

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The astonishing thing about these faithful and complete biographies is that Lucas makes no comment at all about the artists and events of art-historical research. At no point does Lucas live up to all that the reader has been led to expect: he throws no interesting light on the collectors of the day, their tastes or their purchases.

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## Guns and Wells

The artillery-men wait upon the big gun.  
They have its banquet piled  
And ready in greased pyramids,  
They serve the long fat shells like canelone,  
The gun munches with an explosion.

Molten tears silver our countenances,  
Vomit of metal over-plates the cornfields,  
Men blow away like smoke in the ringing brisants.

No doing of mine; says chef-commandant,  
I feed the guns only when they are hungry.

II.  
She tells me the polished skull of a traitor  
Lurks in this well still,  
His comrades gave rough justice,  
Over the parapet laid his bare neck,  
Cutlass-sliced that smuggling head,  
Which dropped like a boulder  
And is down there to this day, she said.

Polished nearly to nothing,  
Bobbing in the well-spring,  
Folding and unfolding in the polishing water,  
Almost glass, and paper-thin,  
Ascending, descending on variable cool water,  
Nodding upon a current which is a spine,  
Spinning like a film of faintest shadow,  
An etched flexile window,  
Reflecting when rain fattens the spring;

Then a sunbeam  
Strikes down the brick shaft  
And there gazes upwards, revolving in the depths,  
A golden face; then the sun  
Goes on and the water goes on polishing.

Peter Redgrove























## Italy: the feminist message

By Caroline Moorehead

There has long been a complaint in Italy that there is very little written expressly for children: what appears in bookshops is most often translations of the better English, American and German books, so that Italian children rarely see things they can identify with, or enjoy the style and actual feel of their own country.

*Vieni con me in campagna* by Ali Mitgusch, for instance, one of the very popular series of almost entirely illustrated books for younger children, takes a farm and crams the pages with figures busy feeding

cows, milking, riding tractors, ploughing. As in Richard Scarry's scenes many of the objects have their names written underneath them. But Ali Mitgusch is a German writer.

When Italian children's books illustrators do enter the field they often in fact seem compelled to imitate: in *Tola, uccellino* and *Piccola la neve*, Altan has produced colourful, stylized, bold drawings—a steaming mug of hot chocolate, a clock, an apple, a snowman—but the format and approach of the books are reminiscent of the Dick Bruna books. The illustrations themselves have considerably more charm of a rather unusual kind, but there is nothing Italian about them. Even the

animals' clothes lack that particularly swamping nature of the garments most Italian children wear.

Recently, however, a new school has appeared in force in the Italian book world: the *Womani's Movement*. So successful have their books been that several purely feminist children's publishing houses have now started up on their own. The quality of the printing and illustrating is excellent; the texts funny, clear and devoid of whimsy.

Most prominent perhaps is the *Edizione della parte delle bambine* (specifically bambine, girls), many of whose books are produced by team work, with Adela Turin and Nella Boschi as the most frequently recurring names. To pick three of the best, for children aged somewhere between five and eight (though it is hard to confine these books to any one age, since the feminist message is apparent only to older children while younger can enjoy the bright and very striking pictures). *Rosencanto* is the story of the land of elephants, where the females are reared on a diet of peonies and anemones—which they do not find very delicious—and forced to wear boots and ruffs, all to encourage a soft pink skin and shining eyes, while their brothers and cousins can romp and squeal in the mud. Pasqualina, a young female, despite the peonies, stays grey, four're not trying to, she tells her father, "You're being rebellious." Finally, in despair, her parents release her to join the males. The other pink girls watch her run, bathe and eat succulent fruit plucked from the trees, until they can stand it no longer, kick off boots and ruffs, and make for the mountains, to this day "it is impossible to say, in the land of the elephants, which are the boys and which the girls".

The *Storia dei panini* takes a dwarf village, too small even to have a name. Here, mothers and daughters live with one another to produce ever more delicious sandwiches which are placed outside their front doors for transportation twice a day to the Big House of the Men. It is a child unwilling to accept this unexplained ritual, goes in search of the House, only to find a lot of harassed, irascible men who stuff down the sandwiches, regard less of the care that has gone into preparing them. This news causes chaos in the village. Within days the women go on strike: no more sandwiches. And then the miracle happens. The village and its inhabitants grow to normal state, and in time fathers "are to be found at home, and even help mothers with the housework".

Le 5 mogli di Barbazotto carries the symbolism further: a spoilt and dictatorial maharajah rejects each of his five wives in turn, for being too intelligent, too stupid, too clever, too studious and too frivolous. One by one, he despatches them to a fine

but remote emerald green palace. Once there, they gang up on him, stage a two-act comedy and tour the countryside with their farce about the absurdity of the maharajah, who, fast becomes a laughing stock among the peasants he has tyrannized.

The feminist publishing houses have also explored and developed the comic strip, the other recent development in Italian books for children. These range from the semi-factual *Agnes* (childbirth), and *Alice e Lucia* (menstruation) to legends, plays and biographies of famous women, slanted more by illustration than text, towards an overtly feminist interpretation. In a slender paperback (and expensive at £1.50) there is *Arianna*, subtitled "in between the lines of a legend", the story of Crete and the sacrifice of Athenian youth to the Minotaur, in which Theseus appears as an arrogant and lustful rogue who abandons Ariadne for her younger sister; but Ariadne, on the island of Naxos with her small son, concludes that she is perhaps better off without him.

The same group of women have also adapted Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, calling it simply *Nora*, and the life of Georges Sand, *Aurora*. The second of the more powerful of the two books, and the more doggedly feminist, is shown to be victimized but very strong, only briefly at the mercy of her drunken and capricious husband, her writing in the end triumphs over her unsatisfactory romantic attachments. These two books are illustrated in colour; the quality of drawing and reproduction is uniformly high, but you have to be used to comics to follow them with any ease.

Gianni Rodari, who won the 1970 Andersen Prize for children's literature, has always taken the view that children must not be written down to, that the language they read must be the one they hear every day, and on television. The result is a colloquial, even chatty style, best brought to the very short stories of *Parole al telefono* intended as the introduction explains, as bed-time stories told over the telephone by a travelling salesman to his daughter at home in Varese. The tales themselves are a curiously surrealist blend of the unexpected and the predictable stories with edge, and a shying away from horror, a little as if Roald Dahl were rewriting Hans Andersen. Rodari's poetry, in *Filastrocche in cielo e in terra* is a tongue in cheek play on words and sounds, "gates" as he calls them, poems to mock the sort of verse they are studied by school children. The strongest impression that remains from his books is one of pleasure; pleasure in the writing, confidence in the result, a closeness to his readers that has nothing of the patronizing or the self-doubt of it.

To turn to Car's *Moglie* is a bit of a disappointment. Margaret Greaves's previous children's books have been enjoyable, fairly impressive, yet also rather derivative. *Moglie* is ambitious and a little bit but it has no real heart to it. The plot is hackneyed, the style is a ring mixture of modern slang and old-fashioned children's bookishness, and it is hard to believe it is set in 1979.

Louise, an orphan, goes to live in the country with her Aunt Bertha, a brusque spinster who is unable to understand Louise's sense of fun. Louise saves a kitten from drowning and makes it her pet. A result she is visited by the great goddess Bast (who is given the gift of time and space travel: to go and return as she wishes, with no disadvantages). After an excursion to the cat world in Egypt, and an "eighteenth-century highwayman" (also referred to as Streatham, though the other is miles apart), Louise's cat is winging its way to Victorian Weymouth where she gets involved in a scandalous rescue of an early Victorian family from a family of aristocratic Dickensian nobles.

The cat-magic is irrelevant to the main plot of Victorian duggery and family intrigue. There is no consistency in what John Wynne does with the chronoclasts of time-travel and anachronisms. He decides to stay in the past-time people come to live in the time.

Although this book seemed put together, there is undoubtedly place for the family in the library. It is a good book, but only when we apply the standards for a children's book, not notice the lack of originality. Italian mothers are great singers.

## Renaissance magic

By Jessica Yates

DIANA WYNNE JONES: *The Magicians of Capri*. Macmillan. £4.95. 0 333 27891 7.  
MARGARET GREAVES: *Cat's Magic*. Methuen. £3.95. 0 416 87540 8.

Diana Wynne Jones's *The Magicians of Capri* is another Christmas story, in which the great escape from *Charmed Life* plays the part of *deus ex machina* in a beautiful fantasy with a North Italian setting. Italy is still divided into a number of city-states, and the story tells of two feuding families, the magicians, the Casa Montano, and the Casa Petrolini, living in a very like Florence, complete with Corso, Piazza Nuova, Cathedral palace and guardian angel.

Both families practice the hereditary science of magic, weaving their family business, which spells are invented, passed on or handed down, and then used in the right way, and the magic is important too. Even the words to the right time have force, and much of the humour of the book derives from the members of the family getting the spells wrong, with ludicrous results.

The hero, Toring Montano, is not as magically gifted as his family, in the course of his life he has to learn to live with practical jokes and to develop into all-out war, while a wicked enchanter plans to take the city and declares war on neighbouring states. Toring Montano is kidnapped, transformed into a French puppet, and forced to enact the traditional play, a game in which his family must be for real.

The Punch and Judy show is part of the background of *Capri*; an atmosphere of magic, names, architecture and food, appropriate to the time, and the story shows the two families, each in its own way, and each with their own magic, each with their own magic, each with their own magic, each with their own magic.

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## YOUNGER FICTION

## The favourites of the future

By Vicki Feaver

JOAN AIKEN: *Arabel and Mortimer*. Illustrated by Quentin Blake. BBC/Jonathan Cape. £4.95. 0 563 17771 3 and 0 224 01765 9.  
QUENTIN BLAKE: *Arabel and Mortimer*. Illustrated by Joan Aiken. BBC/Jonathan Cape. £3.50. 0 224 01612 1.

At least part of the secret of writing a good children's book must be to get the names right. You have only to think of a few famous ones—Long John Silver, Alice, The Mad Hatter, Jemima Puddle-duck, Mr Toad, Pook, William Brown—to realize there is something special about them: not just memorability, or the straightforward way they relate to a real or fantasy world, but a curious solidity. They seem to contain the characters they represent. Joan Aiken's *Arabel and Mortimer* and Quentin Blake's *Mister Magnolia* are in the same mould. They may or may not turn out to be classics but to judge by their names they stand a good chance.

In present-day terms, of course,

Arabel and Mortimer are famous already. They are stars of the small screen. The three stories in this book (along with three earlier ones) were commissioned initially by BBC television's *Jackanory*. Bernard Cribbin read them with the skilled storyteller's knack of seeming not to himself.

Arabel is a resourceful but not particularly unusual child. Her parents, Mr and Mrs Jones, are ordinary folk. Mr Jones, a taxidriver, takes two hours off on Saturday afternoons to watch football while his wife does the shopping and treats herself to a Bohemian brown tart at Norma's Ninth Wave hair salon. Life would be cosy but a bit dull were it not for Mortimer, the family's pet raven. Mortimer has a habit of living things up. He does not intend any harm but, as Mrs Jones remarks, "it makes me nervous when he's in the room: I'm always expecting him to do something horrible". Even Arabel, Mortimer's stoutest defender, feels anxious when she hears screams: "so often they seemed to have some connection with him".

Mortimer, though, is more than just a device for triggering off a riotous sequence of events. He stands for every child who has ever got into trouble for doing something they never intended to be bad. He is infuriating and endearing. He gets cross, he sulks and when he is really

upset he winds himself up in an old green tie and tucks his head under his wing.

The stories proceed at a rattling pace but there are plenty of vivid yet homely images: a ship's wake, for example, "creaming away into the fog like two rows of white knitting". Quentin Blake's illustrations are almost unnecessary but they do capture the immediacy of the action. Mortimer, for instance, standing innocently in the midst of a melee of colliding and flying skateboarders, or Aunt Effie shoving him unceremoniously into a meat safe.

Mister Magnolia, partly because he wrote his own text, but chiefly because it is in colour, affords Quentin Blake far more scope for his ebullient talent. The idea could not be simpler: a jiggling, rhyming sequence deriving from a first line—"Mr Magnolia has only one boot".

What he lacks in footwear, however, is made up for in other directions. We see him, for example, dancing a jig while his sisters play on the flute, scooting along a carpet lane with what would be Arabel and friends clinging on behind him and, in a splendid three-cornered hat, taking the salute while a troop of mice march past. Economical, deceptively slapdash, glowing with colour, the pictures come alive on the page. It is a delightful book: one that could become a favourite.

Nor is this simple role-reversal, "grate-the-males" stuff—Master Salt goes to see despite his bossy big sister, and proves his worth.

Each story has an individual charm. My own favourite is that of Jessie Jump, who after years of hearing that she is "nearly" old enough to ride in the big race, gets her chance when all her jockey family suffer disqualifying mishaps; receiving her prize money she asks "Am I as rich as the Queen now?" "Nearly", says the King. So Jessie is obviously the main target, though, though it is a living warning against ageing and racism comes in for a glancing blow—Mrs Cosmo is said, accomplished, and quite unremarked, and the two boxers' families and their story in multi-racial harmony, after both fathers have decided they are tired of biffing and bopping people—"It's silly." There might be a complaint, that the non-white characters are a conjurer and a boxer, but this would be a churlish cavil.

The books abound in stereotype figures, but the characters animating them are no stereotypes, and all the limitations are gone. I think a hearty welcome is in order for books which offer us not a caricatured reality, but the imaginative exploration of a world of equality, comradeship, and gaiety. To say "This is what it could be like" is as honourable a function of literature as to say "This is what it is like... God help us."

## Freedom from isms

By Joy Chant

ALLAN AHLBERG and JOE WRIGHT: *Mrs Ping the Plumber*. Kestrel/Puffin. £1.95 (paperback 60p). 0 14 03 1238 2 and 0 7226 5659 9.  
Mr Biff the Boxer. Kestrel/Puffin. £1.95 (paperback 60p). 0 7226 5657 2 and 0 14 03 1236 6.

ALLAN AHLBERG and ANDRE ASHTUTZ: *Master Salt the Sailor's Son*. Kestrel/Puffin. £1.95 (paperback 60p). 0 7226 5661 0 and 0 14 03 1240 4.

ALLAN AHLBERG and ANDRE ASHTUTZ: *Miss Jump the Jockey*. Kestrel/Puffin. £1.95 (paperback 60p). 0 7226 5662 9 and 0 14 03 1241 2.

ALLAN AHLBERG and JOE WRIGHT: *Mr Cosmo the Conjuror*. Kestrel/Puffin. £1.95 (paperback 60p). 0 7226 5658 0 and 0 14 03 1237 4.

## Strange occurrences

By Caroline Copnall

MARGARET GREAVES: *Charlie, Emma and Alberic*. Methuen. £2.95. 0 416 87505 0.

JOHN FULLER: *The Extraordinary Wool Mill*. Deutsch. £4.25. 0 233 97196 3.

A hard, would not be most people's choice of pet, but in this, as in so many things, things differ and when Charlie White finds what he takes to be a lizard in a hole in the road where he lives, he is delighted—a pet of his own at last.

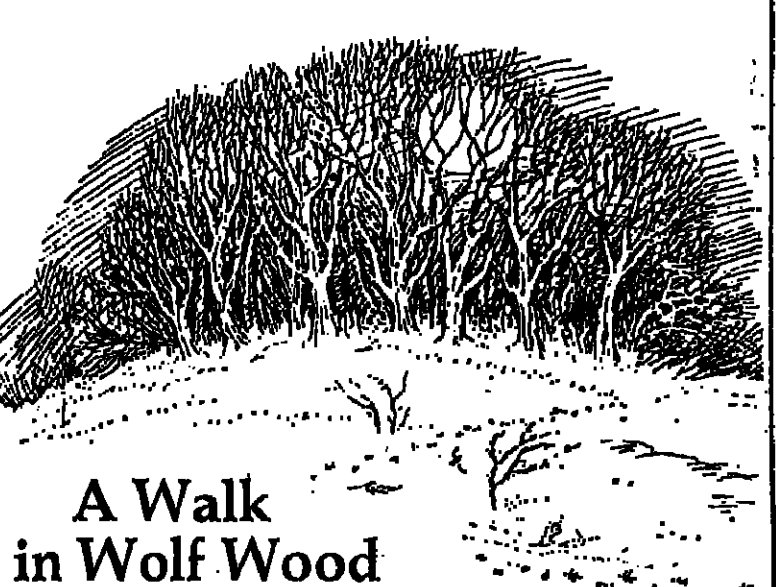
Charlie, Emma and Alberic by Margaret Greaves is a delightful account of what happens when this cheerful little dragon settles down to life in Mill Street as Charlie's pet, firmly remaining invisible most of the time to everyone except Charlie and Emma.

Alberic's moment of glory comes when he takes a ride role in the school play ("St George and the Dragon"), standing in at the last moment when chicken pox strikes, and scoring a huge success. After this he decides to stretch his wings a bit and takes off to see the world, promising to return. He has a number of relations asleep under Mill Street, and when it looks as if Charlie and Emma's concentration, as though the road works are about to disturb them in their hide-out, Alberic reappears in time to warn them to make their escape; which they do in a majestic getaway in the middle of the night. As Emma tactfully remarks, "it's a bit of a mess, but it's a relations, aren't they?" This is a thoroughly enjoyable book which should appeal to a lot of children.

Fantasy and reality mingle too in the stories in *The Extraordinary Wool Mill* by John Fuller.

Wool Mill by John Fuller. In the tale story he and his daughter Emily set out to visit a certain wool mill. They buy Christmas presents for Emily's mother. They lose their way and come upon a mill run entirely by sheep—Barwell and Flo (short for Flock). But when a few days later they try to find it again they cannot, and one day she ever heard of it; but the bedspread Emily bought there for a pound is at home, large as life.

Then there is the village submerged under water, which Emily swears she visited; and the fattest woman in the world who has to be got out through the roof of her cottage by a mountain rescue helicopter because the door is no longer wide enough for her. ("Where's she going?" asked Emily. "Hospital," said Mr Pugh, with a sniff. "They've got to thin her out somehow. All that ice-cream you see?") There is also a ghostly little yellow cat that precedes them all the way home one evening after a trip to the cinema. Unfortunately, the net result is disappointing. The book ought to be charming; it is very nearly, but it is not.



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Mary Stewart

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July 18  
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November 21

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## Religious books for children

By Michael Trend

Heroic stories have always been popular with children's writers, and the recently published religious books for children discussed here show that the greatest interest in religious matters is still inspired by the grand stories of the Bible. The Creation, Abraham, Moses and especially Noah (three books on Noah in the past few months) are still popular. Generations are growing up with little or no formal teaching about the Bible, and the appearance of so many versions of these stories in forms specially for children may be the only way to ensure that some knowledge of the Bible is attained. The dangers of trivialising and sentimentalising the Bible are also evident—as they have been since Victorian times. A wide readership is often bought dearly.

There are, however, many fewer books that teach children about other aspects of religious life. Non-Bible stories, often with a social interest, are being widely read—stories that often challenge traditional patterns of piety. But there seems to be much less emphasis placed on the teachings of the Church and on its spiritual life, and any notion that the Church is essentially a transcendental body is often ignored or neglected. In recently published religious books for children one can clearly see a reaction against the rigid learning by rote of the recent past, but this reaction is now in danger of reducing religion to bare bones and, eventually, ashes.

Beginning this short survey of religious books we find, for the very young, the Collins pop-up books. The texts of these books give summaries of the stories concerned and the rest is conveyed by the illustrations and the often ingenious pop-ups. Noah's ark comes sailing up from the stormy waves, the Red Sea parts before Moses' and the reader's eyes, and there is a very satisfying scene where the lost sheep of the parable is making good its escape with frantically waving front legs.

Have Snashall has initiated a series of Bible stories for the National Christian Education Council. The two books published so far are *The Good News of Jesus* and *The Ministry of Jesus*. They follow the New Testament very closely and are attractively illustrated with line drawings. They are clearly designed to be text books ("Add Tyre and Bethsaida to your map") and should succeed well in this aim.

The Bible Retold in Pictures comes with glowing references from Lord Soper, David Shepherd, David Kossoff and the Archbishop of York. It is Lord Soper's comment that these are the best explanations of the Bible that men feel for the project. "At this

time when so few, comparatively, make themselves acquainted with the Bible's treasures, I am sure that these six books will do nothing but good." It is probably realistic to think that this strip-cartoon Bible will attract quite a large readership. The pictures are vivid and interesting, although the words are occasionally over-dramatic in the style of the comic strip. (One of the spectators to the great rains which preceded the great flood suddenly says "I don't like the look of this.")

Margaret Ralph's *Followers of Jesus* is a useful book, retelling some of the stories from the Acts of the Apostles. These stories will have the interest of being unfamiliar to many readers.

The Lion Encyclopedia of the Bible is well illustrated and has particularly good maps. It is divided up into various sections—"Archaeology and the Bible", "Religion and the Bible", etc. The section on "Key Teaching and Events" contains articles on such subjects as Grace, Mercy and Judgment. This goes some way to restore the great complexity and diversity of the Bible, for most of the books discussed so far treat the stories in the simplest possible ways.

Alan T. Dale's *Portrait of Jesus* is an exception to this rule. Suitable for both children and adults it presents a very lively picture of Jesus. The book takes into account many of the advances made by modern scholarship, and the style of writing is enthusiastic (some times, perhaps, a little breathless) without over-seeming to be so. Mr Dale is particularly good at bringing out the main characteristics of Jesus' ministry—the events that took place on the country roads, the incidents that took place over the supper table, and so on. Mr Dale ends with a "Personal Epilogue" which explains his own position. Among the Bible books—so often not second-hand variations on a theme—Mr Dale's book is impressive.

Apart from the Bible story, the editing life story is one of the oldest traditions in the history of the Christian church. The examples of these are provided by the Religious Education Press's Faith in Action series. The well-told stories of Dr Bernardo, Martin Luther King, Edith Cavell and Brother Andrew, the Bible smuggler, are simple without being simplistic. They are suitable for a wide age range and each contains information about how to discover more about the subject of the book. The story of Edith Cavell is in many ways a good example of the series. It manages to tell the story without undue bias and when one gets to Cavell's "It is not enough to love one's own people" the reader should be able to understand how Edith Cavell both became a nationalistic symbol and how as an individual she transcended such national boundaries.

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233 97107 0

## FICTION

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John Fuller  
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Conventry E. Telegraph  
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A family adventure story set in Yorkshire.  
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## commentary

### Gange in Garageland

By Nick Roddick

Rude Boy  
West End and Manchester

Pop music has recently come to be rather respectable. First it changed its name to rock, then the posh papers acquired rock columnists and nowadays *Arena* is more likely to do a feature on rock than on opera. With all this tolerance, it's good to see that there are still some hackles left to be raised. "The film," declared one national press review of Jack Hazan and David Mingay's *Rude Boy*, "is just an excuse for mindless violence, mindless music and mindless sex." The film, declared another national press review of Jack Hazan and David Mingay's *Rude Boy*, "is just an excuse for mindless violence, mindless music and mindless sex." The film, declared another national press review of Jack Hazan and David Mingay's *Rude Boy*, "is just an excuse for mindless violence, mindless music and mindless sex."

The enormous difference between the two films is in fact one of surfaces. The world of *A Bigger Splash*

was rich, cosmopolitan, camp and beautiful; that of *Rude Boy* is poor, alienated, ugly and above all angry: the general environment, to use the title of a Clash song, is "Garageland." The film is at its weakest, like the earlier one, when it manipulates: three scenes of more or less excruciating acting in which Ray discusses politics and rock-and-roll with the Clash's lead singer, Joe Strummer. It is at its strongest when it leaves the connections between events hanging. NE meetings, an anti-Nazi League concert and a Conservative rally at Central Hall are juxtaposed with dramatized scenes of Ray being arrested, vomiting after being beaten up by a bouncer at the Glasgow Apollo or being flogged by a bored groupie in a club toilet, as well as of a young black being arrested for pickpocketing. Cut into all this are some of the best filmed rock concerts ever seen in a British movie. These scenes are so good that it is easy to lose sight of an irony which, almost by chance, becomes central to the film: in the course of the two and a half years it took to make *Rude Boy*, the Clash turn from a dirty punk band into a fairly clean rock one. The sweaty club scenes at the beginning give way to Mick Jones's studio recording of the Neil Young-like ballad "Stay Free" and the Hammersmith

Odium version of the sanitized rock classic "I fought the law (and the law won)". By avoiding the naive device of turning an uncomfortable present into some nightmare near-future (which made parts of Derek Jarman's *Julien* almost indistinguishable from Thames's recent *Quartermass*), *Rude Boy* comes up with a powerful picture of Britain in the early 1980s. But for all its political content it is a far from political film, and certainly not the piece of opportunistic left extremism this summary might suggest. *Rude Boy* makes no direct political statement. What is important about it is the equation it makes between the music and the social environment. Because the music still has the energy to shock, even if, to adapt Engels, the power of the bourgeois music business is such that it has tamed Punk bourgeois. Hazan and Mingay have produced a film which is both a Punk Rock film and a film about Punk Rock; and they have achieved this not simply by filming concerts, and certainly not by creating a facile Tommy-like fantasy to repeat what the music has already said, but by the strikingly simple method of combining the music with images of the world that produced it: Garageland.

## Parangs in Metroland

By Victoria Glendinning

Before the Party  
Queen's

The Maugham story "Before the Party" is about a sullen widow who reveals to her conventional family just as they are about to leave for a garden party where they will meet a bishop, that she is a fit of deeper madness than they diplo-matic husband in Borneo with a parang. Rodney Ackland's play, first performed in 1949, fleshes out the story with extra characters—an old Scotch nanny (Madeleine Christie), an extra literate sister (Jayne Torrance) and a new author (Miles Anderson) for the widow—and more humorous business, centring on the social aspirations of the middle-class parents, played with confident comic professionalism by Phyllis Collard on the twittering, scotchlike mother and Michael Gough as the solicitor father. The dumpy young widow of the story is transformed into Jane Asher, taut and willowy, good to look at and to listen to.

But the coward-and-custard social comedy that is the prevailing tone of the piece in Ackland's version fits uncomfortably over her macabre revelations. Maugham's dry narrative and flashback technique make

it all work—just. Towards the end of the second act Laura, the widow, confesses her crime—again and at length, with all the horrid details and all the emotional stops pulled out—to her new lover, Jane Asher does it well and with conviction, but there is no context here for her bravura performance.

Tom Conti's direction fails to make either adequate sense or adequate nonsense out of the play's ambivalence. Since this must be of deeper madness than they diplo-matic husband in Borneo with a parang, Rodney Ackland's play, first performed in 1949, fleshes out the story with extra characters—an old Scotch nanny (Madeleine Christie), an extra literate sister (Jayne Torrance) and a new author (Miles Anderson) for the widow—and more humorous business, centring on the social aspirations of the middle-class parents, played with confident comic professionalism by Phyllis Collard on the twittering, scotchlike mother and Michael Gough as the solicitor father. The dumpy young widow of the story is transformed into Jane Asher, taut and willowy, good to look at and to listen to.

## Reading Scheme

Here is Peter. Here is Jane. They like fun. Jane has a big doll. Peter has a ball. Look, Jane, look! Look at the dog! See him run!

Here is Mummy. She has baked a bun. Here is the milkman. He has come to call. Here is Peter. Here is Jane. They like fun.

Go Peter! Go Jane! Come, milkman, come! The milkman likes Mummy. She likes them all. Look, Jane, look! Look at the dog! See him run!

Here are the curtains. They shut out the sun. Let us peep! On tiptoe Jane! You are small! Here is Peter. Here is Jane. They like fun.

I hear a cat, Jane. The milkman looks glum. Here is Daddy in his car. Daddy is tall. Look, Jane, look! Look at the dog! See him run!

Daddy looks very cross. Has he a gun? Up milkman! Up milkman! Over the wall! Here is Peter. Here is Jane. They like fun. Look, Jane, look! Look at the dog! See him run!

Wendy Cope

## Oxford University Press

### The New Columbia Encyclopedia

Edited by William H. Harris and Judith S. Levey

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John C. 136







## The baddie Basilisks

By Craig Brown

WALTER WANGERIN, Jr.  
The Book of the Dun Cow  
241pp. Allen Lane. £4.95.  
0 7139 1328 2.

Was ever a villain so revolutely evil as Wyrn?

He was in the shape of a serpent, so damnably huge that he could pass once around the earth and then bite his own tail ahead of him. He lived in caverns underneath the earth's crust; but he could, when he wished, crawl through rock as if it had been loose dust. He lived in darkness, in dampness, in the cold. He stank fearfully, because his outer skin was always rotting, a runny putrefaction which made him inch, and which he tore away from himself by scraping his back against the granite teeth of the deep.

Set in the days before humans, before the earth was "sent whirling—wild, helpless and ignorant" away from the absolute centre of the universe, *The Book of the Dun Cow* is populated by animals, who are the unknown guardians of the awful evil beneath them. Their strutting leader is the rooster Chaunticleer, vain and loudly in command. Wyrn is determined to escape; his envious are thousands of Basilisks, serpents

with rooster's heads, led by Cockatrice.

On one level the novel is a straightforward story of the conflict between good and evil. The evil is pure: never have there been such grotesqueries as the Basilisks, black, licentious, long, damp, each with two burning eyes in its head and teeth (at birth) already in its mouth, they were small, curled serpents. Walter Wangerin does not shirk full and vivid descriptions of the monstrosity of their attacks:

They sprang from the earth and sailed through the air like fire like darts. They stabbed the hearts of many creatures. The smallest serpents struck furry animals between their toes; then these animals would curl into shivering balls and plead for someone to chop their feet away.

Those representing the force of good are less dedicated. They consist of a motley mix of farmyard animals such as Munda Cant, a music-depressing dog whose moans are prompted by the length of his nose; the criminal egg-snatcher Ebenezer Rat; the gossiping, blustering turkeys; and the fleas, who share the collective name "Scarce". Whereas most anthropomorphic drips blobs of blubbering sentimentality, Wangerin's is harsh, robust and energetic. His goodies are far from cuddly: there are times when they call for capital punishment to be invoked, others when they quarrel, or hurt each other. Nevertheless, Wangerin's

description of love Blooming Chaunticleer and the refugee hen, Penelope, is more moving than many a human romance.

Wangerin has an exceptional ability to choose the most powerful words and to form the most tough and balanced sentences (he seems to have followed Waugh's dictum that each sentence should be directly and easily translatable into Latin). But the main strength of the book is in its depiction of the insecurity of freedom and goodness. The animals do not know the reason for their existence: "...very few of them recognized the full importance of their being, and of their being there; and the ignorance endangered terribly the good fulfillment of their purpose." Only gradually are the animals alerted to the real presence and danger of evil, and when it is up to them, their leader, Chaunticleer, is filled with doubt, and with a fierce temptation to submit to death. In this and other respects the book has parallels with the New Testament. These parallels are not contrivances designed to lend a bogus aura to a simple tale, but the natural projections of a deeply religious mind.

*The Book of the Dun Cow* is Walter Wangerin's first novel, though he has written several books for young children. Is a children's novel? It is to be captured by the force of a tremendous plot, then *The Book of the Dun Cow* is very much a children's novel. But Mr Wangerin is the most adult of novelists.

## The voice of restraint

By Jennifer Uglov

DENYS VAL BAKER:  
Women Writing: 3  
186pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £5.95.  
0 283 98586 0

The title of this anthology gives a misleading impression of immediacy and breadth: the stories included span two decades, most have been published previously and they represent only a narrow spectrum of English women writers. "Women Writing" also implies that there is some definable subject-matter or common to female writers which clearly distinguishes them from men, a point with which many people, including most women authors, would take issue. Certainly particular authors write consciously from a "woman's point of view", but this phrase can cover positions from the writer of hospital romances to the radical feminist.

In other cases, though, shared backgrounds do give rise to similar perceptions of the situation of women, and of relationships between the sexes, which create the impression of a school, or at least a generation of writers. The contributors to this volume fall into such a group, and they include several familiar names—Margaret Drabble, Mary Renault, Jackie Gillott, Lynn Reid Banks, Penelope Gilliat.

The editor, Denys Val Baker, relates the proliferation of successful women writers to "the days of women's liberation, of a new freedom in many directions for women to express themselves as never before", yet the dominant tone of this collection is one of repression and restraint rather than freedom and experimentation. If one can identify a common voice it is the voice of a well-educated Englishwoman verging on forty, usually slightly older—sometimes breathless and silly, sometimes dignified, occasionally cool and witty but rarely flamboyant and never vulgar.

These authors may chafe against the bonds, but their norms are clearly those represented by marriage, families, detached houses and boarding schools.

There are one or two outsiders in the group, notably the oldest contributor, Kate Roberts, represented by a mystical sketch translated from the Welsh, and the youngest, Julie Welch, who contributes a cynical slap-dash piece about Fleet Street in the early 1970s. This contrast illustrates the rather obvious care with which the editor has varied the selection. Settings range from Alexandria in the time of Christ to seedy provincial bungalows; touches of menace, natural and supernatural, are provided by Jane Gaskell and Mary Daly.

The strongest places are those which concentrate on unrolling the uncertainties of middle-class England. Nina Bayden's *The Birds on the Trees* describes the way a young girl's agony at the hostile tensions unsuccessfully suppressed during a terrible family Sunday lunch explodes in a physical attack upon her censorious maiden aunt. The children are more perceptive

than the adults and the piece is memorable for the way in which Nina Bayden creates their clarity of vision and intensity of feeling.

Once, she had seen a picture in a book of a woman running across a bridge: a reproduction, her father told her, of a famous painting called *The Scream*. The woman's face was red and white and her mouth open in a silent scream. Lucy had said, and he had smiled and turned the page, saying lightly, "I expect you?" But Lucy had known it wasn't true. The woman was frightened of someone coming behind, but of something cold and dark, hidden inside her.

Lucy identifies this expression with that of her mother, for whom she feels both resentment and a protective anxiety.

Jackie Gillott's story, *The Man Who Turned the Other Cheek*, also has the disruption of a meal—this time a dinner party—as its centre-piece, and is also about complex mother-daughter relationships.

This account of life and death among the retired couple of Candover is extremely funny. The relentless helplessness of her heroine is described with a subtle mixture of farce and pathos, as her neighbours nervously remember their debts, such as "the time when Mrs. Holgate's husband had died on the homebound commuter train and had been taken up, upright beneath his bowler, to the way to Aldershot before in condition had been recognised it was Hilda who had retired in a limousine and escorted him home in a ambulance". The panic and helplessness beneath Hilda's capriciousness is maintained throughout, which find release in recurrent nightmares, are all the more pathetic by contrast.

Perhaps it is significant that the story of the twelve, the Rhine's "Sleep it off Lady", should be a superb description of the ability to communicate and of loneliness in the face of death. The themes which run beneath the surface of all the pieces are of course, brings the story to view, a writer who changed biography in our century though employing hardly any of the advances so far mentioned. But the use of irony and brilliance in biography is a topic apart. They can displace for a time, but not replace, what the craft demands.

Using shorthand again, I shall call my third category the historical biography. The writer in this class works after the dust has settled and dust in the eyes there is, never once saw Shelley plain and the sometimes wailing in the night which that were possible—just a case. But "plain" is not impossible, perhaps? This biographer works from books and documents, unburdened by the drugstore (and skinned) endured by the other two kinds; untroubled also by that touch of the low detective. Kings and great revolutionaries and other great persons, including artists, may be his. His material, in which "case" librarians' and scholars (bless them all for their labours) have long since made accessible a vast array of facts and sources, assembled, collated, and sorted out into neat, most, labour-intensive work, the simple chronology, which can turn to nonsense, through the magic of print that in minutes, one can be scanned in a book. One can even take a writer to do their work "too soon", which is to say not late at all. The historical biographer is more fortunate, for with the greatest and most enduring human projects there is no such thing as "late". Could anyone say "too late"? Walter Jackson Bates' "The Work of Samuel Johnson" is a case in point.

These are the three main categories, and of course some interesting kinds will come to mind. The historical biographer given the title "late" seems to be a writer who may constitute a separate class. But broadly speaking, the biographer cannot step outside the class that has been ordained. The new moments of exasperation over the practitioners in either or both of the other two classes. He owns the time machine, and as a rule receives no second chance.

It happens that within one of a century I have had the

experience of working to completion in the second two classes: biography—the reported and the historical—the self-same human subject. I did receive a second chance, and the experience seems worth reporting on. If not unique, it must be most unusual, since it can only occur where a young biographer writes of a subject who died young, and can later return to the task when the subject's friends have died.

Some thirty years ago, I wrote a biography of my compatriot Katherine Mansfield, beginning it in New Zealand and completing it in England, on the pattern of her own short life. It was a young man's book: I was twenty-seven when I began it, and still twenty-seven when I finished it four years later, or so I think when forced to look at it; and at the time of publication Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923) would only have been in her sixties. Thus many of her contemporaries and friends were still alive—not Lawrence though, nor Virginia Woolf, nor Ottoline Morrell, nor A. R. Orage. In writing the book I had the help of both of her husbands, two of her sisters, the adoring Ida Baker whom she once referred to as her "wife", and several others who had been intimate friends at one time or another. But in publishing it I also had to think of them, and of one of my informants there, he is near enough in time to go there; and working soon enough with the necessary tact and gifts—perhaps a touch of the detective, or some historical training to help him—she was not turning his unattachment to account and produce biography of a superior sort. George Painter, Erid Starke and Michael Holroyd come to mind among practitioners in the literary field. Mention of the last of course brings the story to view, a writer who changed biography in our century though employing hardly any of the advances so far mentioned. But the use of irony and brilliance in biography is a topic apart. They can displace for a time, but not replace, what the craft demands.

When a dozen years had passed, in the 1960s, the first biography went out of print; and then a great change came over my life. Partly on the strength of the book, I was invited in 1966 by Dr George Whalley to join the Department of English at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. Four years later it was he who suggested that I might "revise" it, in the light of new material. I would be eligible for research funds, and for substantial leave—unaccustomed privileges for me.

I set to work, and within a year or so I began to understand what had really happened. Because of deaths in the previous fifteen years, all the "papers", or nearly all, had become available, and very great quantities had crossed the Atlantic to North America: in Texas, the inward correspondence of Lady Ottoline Morrell, packed with references to Mansfield and Murry at Garsington; in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, the papers of Ottoline Morrell, and papers of Edward Marsh, who was part of the story too; in the British Museum, those of Ottoline's (once withheld from me) and of Katherine's (once withheld from me) letters to the *German Garden*; in Hamilton, Ontario, the archives of Bertrand Russell, who in 1916 made a pass at Katherine Mansfield (I think that describes it while also having an affair with Lady Constance Macleod, and later addressing Ottoline Morrell as "My Darling"). In every letter now in Texas (also sending descriptions of "K.M." to both of

them). Finally, and very importantly, in New Zealand there now were all the notebooks, manuscripts, and letters from K.M. herself which Murry had owned in 1950, but which I had not then seen. There were even people still living, in their eighties, who could help me, and one man in his nineties: Katherine's first husband, George Bowden, whom she had deserted for a young violinist whose letters from her, unknown to me as yet, were also in Ontario.

What had really happened, then was this. I had written one biography "too soon", with access to many personal impressions from my subject's intimate friends, but with dust in my eyes as well; in some sense a personal biography, class one, but really a reported biography, class two. And now, with access to hoards of letters and papers, including her own letters, research funds enabling me to get to them, because that is a recognized part of the academic life in North America) I was to come at

advance of photocopying, the effect of which on literary researches is a fascinating topic. I should really not embark on. Given photocopies, you can visit that library again and again without supporting the airlines; you can punch holes in Xerox copies, put them in binders, and move them about as chronology emerges; you can make notes on them, for dating and other purposes; you can even take them to bed, in book form. Next morning while shaving the solution suddenly appears, as if from nowhere. At the guarded tables of research libraries, in my experience, no solutions ever appear—though they might if I did my shaving there.

I am nearly ready to compare the two experiences of biography, and perhaps to echo Mr Chadband's "What is terewith?" But it is not every reader who already knows what Katherine Mansfield did in her very short life, or why, or how. Born Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp in Wellington in 1888, she was the third child—the third

daughter, and this was her first offence—an ambitious Colonial businessman who very much wanted a son in a prosperous family, she became in some sense a rejected child.

At the age of nine she wrote and published her first short story, in the school magazine, and announced that she was "going to be a writer", possibly because her father's first cousin had just then published the book *My Darling* (which was then a best-seller). She was then a pudgy, moody, difficult girl, a little overweight. At fourteen, looking quite different, she was taken with her sister to Queen's College, Harlequin Street, where Walter Riggall, a man of letters, was then a teacher. At fourteen, looking quite different, she was taken with her sister to Queen's College, Harlequin Street, where Walter Riggall, a man of letters, was then a teacher. At fourteen, looking quite different, she was taken with her sister to Queen's College, Harlequin Street, where Walter Riggall, a man of letters, was then a teacher.

This enormous increase had three independent causes, which I re-capitulate: the change in the value of money (and the value in dollars) of literary papers from that period; research facilities normally to the academic world into which I had been invited (not quite so normal now); and the technological

## Biography—the 'Scarlet Experiment'

By Antony Alpers

Returning to London in 1910, she began writing stories for A. R. Orage's *New Age*. In 1912 she threw in her lot instead with John Middleton Murry, aged twenty-two, and his magazine called *Rhyming*. They lived together, with Ida Baker often near, and always beloved. Then Lawrence and Frieda turned up and tossed their lives around. They saw her as a liar, but, as Frieda once said, "she also knows more about truth than other people, and she's got the guts to say the ugly things". Katherine, meanwhile had tuberculosis, but did not know it yet; she learnt that in 1918, and nearly all of her best writing was done in the five years that remained. With that writing, in pursuit of a certain kind of truth about human behaviour and a form in which to express it, she changed the art of the short story in English, but did not quite achieve the fourth book that would have been her best one. She died in 1923, aged thirty-four.

In my new biography, three chapters take her up to the age of nineteen, when she left New Zealand for good, and eighteen more are devoted to the fifteen years that remained—her writing life. (My own biographer, Frank Lea, once told me how he envied me for this compression of the span.) The scheme, except for one chapter on Virginia Woolf, is strictly chronological. But a critical thread is woven on, because in Katherine Mansfield's case, the writing and the life are one—shot through with comedy and tragedy. Thus the technical problems are considerable.

Now then: what are the rules for proximate biography, involving personal "research"? For a start, chronology is everything. The facts in order first, and get them right, or ludicrous conclusions may result (and interviews go to waste). This means collecting every trivial fact, in the notes at least, and much detective work, and later, sacrificing precious discoveries. "Murder your darlings", said Colette—good advice for the biographer, too. On the subject of gossip, I early formulated one rule for myself: "Always listen to gossip. The more you hear, the less you will have to use." (It cancels out.) In 1947 K.M.'s school friend Ruth Herrick, by then the Chief Commissioner of Girl Guides in New Zealand, told me a piece of gossip about an alleged pregnancy which I left out the first time round, not feeling sure of it. Thirty years later, still there in my notes, it turned out to be crucial, and cleared up a mystery, though only because it then linked up with a document.

Depending on temperament, one should probably attempt all possible interviews. Raw from New Zealand, I did not have that temperament. I vividly remember G. E. Moore, whom I used to meet in Cambridge in a purely social way, saying to me once, "I think Russell knew her rather well". Tackle Bertrand Russell! I lacked the nerve to never tried. Yet what could Russell have told me, in 1949? With Murry still living, he could hardly have shown me the letters from Katherine which he was just then sorting out (and mailing) up in very envelopes. He would have had to say, in one of his fine evasions, "I don't think there is anything more that I can tell you". Years passed before I handled those letters in Canada, and read what he had written about them in 1949.

Dear, kind Frank Swinnerton, wishing to encourage and help me, suggested I come with him to meet Elliot, but out of respect and shyness I demurred. "Oh, come on, he's a nice old codger." Again, what would Elliot, of all people, have been prepared to tell, biographer, in the strange private lives? In fact, he also knew K.M., but could not have known the same evening, joined the violin

subject again, in class three. I was to have a second chance.

Was it "easier", because I had done it before and therefore knew the story? It was not. It was very much harder, and it took more than twice as long. The "story" was in fact a different one, at least to me. It was a question partly of dust in the eyes: the first time round (not only the image of Murry's idealized, "perfect" Katherine to be expunged, but also Ida Baker's much less innocent creation of a different perfect Katherine) and partly of mastering all the fresh material, on a vastly greater scale. In 1950 my files and notes and books could all be got into a Rinsco carton, which could be slid under a bed, such was life at the time. The second biography, collected with the help of Queen's University, the Canada Council, the Xerox Corporation, modern filing equipment, and uncounted clerical, amounted in simple shelf-length to twenty times as much.

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advance of photocopying, the effect of which on literary researches is a fascinating topic. I should really not embark on. Given photocopies, you can visit that library again and again without supporting the airlines; you can punch holes in Xerox copies, put them in binders, and move them about as chronology emerges; you can make notes on them, for dating and other purposes; you can even take them to bed, in book form. Next morning while shaving the solution suddenly appears, as if from nowhere. At the guarded tables of research libraries, in my experience, no solutions ever appear—though they might if I did my shaving there.

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## Branches of learning

By Anne Duchêne

JAMES MCCONKEY:  
The Tree House Confessions  
214pp. Heinemann. £5.95.  
434 46181 4

This novel (given the accolade of an award last year by the American Academy of Arts and Literature) is James McConkey's third. He has also published stories and a critical study of Forster, and has taught literature and creative writing for twenty years at Cornell. The "Confessions" are a passionate enquiry of deep, contained feeling and reflection. Compared with white—the private *biographe*, the assertive individual body, all the processes of fermentation we look for in novelists of quality—the book may at first appear, misleadingly, as modestly translucent as water—but it is pure spring water, with very strong mineral properties.

Its narrator, an American of fifty, is in contemporary retreat, recent summer in his desert retreat, the better to reconsider his life, and in particular to try to assess how memory, in the shape of our experience of "Nature and humanity", influences our behaviour something which may sound simple, but is not. He is moved to this by the death of his mother, who seemed, before dying, to reject him and everything else.

At the point of narration, he is editing a small Kentucky newspaper which—characteristically of him—never wholly denounces local corruption, but nonetheless holds it usefully in check; all his public activities—education, soldiering, journalism—remain incidental, however, to the principal theme. He recalls a childhood passed happily, despite his father's detention, in a small town, and chiefly remarkable for two things: his mother's capacity to press the holes of trees as to silence the cicadas inside them; and a moment, when finding an old house kept alive by breathing through a tube in its neck, he has to fight the impulse experimentally to block the tube. Later, he works his way through college, marries his childhood sweetheart, rebuffs her, coopts their son into a happy second marriage, and sees the boy killed in an accident from which he cannot wholly exculpate himself.

The interdependence of experience, or memory, and action is explored with discretion, humour and unrelenting moral honesty. The mild convention that the narrator is addressing his thoughts to his second wife allows a low pitch of voice, and an easy, allusive movement between past and present. It is a very engaging low key, and works on the reader's mind like the unexpected confidences of a usually undemanding friend.

In the last six pages, however,

these "Confessions" rather suddenly reveal their ancestry, St Augustine, all at once, prevails: not only because he too lived in a "moving toward psychic collapse and possibly rebirth", but because his mother, too, after offering her son an ecstatic vision, asked when dying to be forgotten. The narrator, a slower learner than the saint, reaches two conclusions: that "a travel bludge us into a human community" (one recalls Augustine's phrase of "the stormy fellowship of human life"), and that "nothing matters" in the "pervasive radiance" of God. "Nothing matters", presented in the penultimate paragraph, is naturally somewhat enlarged on, but the reader may be ungraciously dazzled by such abrupt illumination; and "betrayal" too, carries more tones of wit and passion than the delicate balances the book has been cogitating.

Moreover, one has, of course, to reappreciate the whole book in the Augustinian light, the preoccupations with memory, the confessions of the flesh; the maternal parallels; the impulse to block the horse's breathing-tube echoing the saintly pear-tree; and so on. This is a very sensitive and serious book. But when Augustinian "Confessions" constantly prefigure his *City of God*, this good American disciple leaves us too abruptly at the gates; and though it is a measure of his virtue that we would have wished longer in his company, the abruptness is frustrating.

## Mates and memories

By Sally Ramsey

ROWAN HEWLESON:  
Salt Pan  
196pp. Melbourne House. £5.50.  
0 86161 020 2

*Salt Pan*, a first novel from an unknown Australian short story writer, traces the progress of its young hero, Sean Slócum, from the idyll of an Australian boyhood to the unforeseen horrors of the Vietnam war. Essentially the story contains nothing that will devastate with its originality, the startling revelation, only a deliciously rich mixture of delicacy and panache, the hint of something winsomely poetic superimposed upon much that is harshly and solidly Australian. So Slócum, it is, is a valiant effort, arising from childhood to adolescence, is made to coexist with a raucous troupe of adult drunkards, led and pursued

by Bill Slócum, the rugged, though sensitive, archetype of the all-Australian male. It is the expert intertwining of the two contrasting elements that lies at the heart of the novel's success.

Surprisingly, for a work so steeped in earthy Australian characteristics (gales, bush fires, mates, beer, yards and such), overall impression is one of great tenderness. Sean's childhood is lived out in a benign postwar haze, and the series of episodes which constitutes the bulk of the novel becomes a series of inter-related memories, the sum of an ever-receding innocence and a slowly receding childhood.

It is only near the end that harsh reality is permitted entry, and even then it is kept at arm's length. The publisher's blurb may insist that the Vietnam war will change his life irrevocably, but this is only a device for *Salt Pan* ends on a confident note of maturity, an echo of the voice of a previous generation, and concrete proof that history is

cyclical. Since the prevailing mood throughout has been one of confident assurance (this conclusion after all, survivors) this conclusion is neither a shock nor a disappointment. Nevertheless, Rowan Hewleson's attitude here is greatly

Consequently, *Salt Pan* never out- lapses into a humdrum realism (despite Sean's story, which is a de facto version of *Cider with Rosie*). Sean's childhood is lived out in a benign postwar haze, and the series of episodes which constitutes the bulk of the novel becomes a series of inter-related memories, the sum of an ever-receding innocence and a slowly receding childhood.

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It happens that within one of a century I have had the

experience of working to completion in the second two classes: biography—the reported and the historical—the self-same human subject. I did receive a second chance, and the experience seems worth reporting on. If not unique, it must be most unusual, since it can only occur where a young biographer writes of a subject who died young, and can later return to the task when the subject's friends have died.

Some thirty years ago, I wrote a biography of my compatriot Katherine Mansfield, beginning it in New Zealand and completing it in England, on the pattern of her own short life. It was a young man's book: I was twenty-seven when I began it, and still twenty-seven when I finished it four years later, or so I think when forced to look at it; and at the time of publication Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923) would only have been in her sixties. Thus many of her contemporaries and friends were still alive—not Lawrence though, nor Virginia Woolf, nor Ottoline Morrell, nor A. R. Orage. In writing the book I had the help of both of her husbands, two of her sisters, the adoring Ida Baker whom she once referred to as her "wife", and several others who had been intimate friends at one time or another. But in publishing it I also had to think of them, and of one of my informants there, he is near enough in time to go there; and working soon enough with the necessary tact and gifts—perhaps a touch of the detective, or some historical training to help him—she was not turning his unattachment to account and produce biography of a superior sort. George Painter, Erid Starke and Michael Holroyd come to mind among practitioners in the literary field. Mention of the last of course brings the story to view, a writer who changed biography in our century though employing hardly any of the advances so far mentioned. But the use of irony and brilliance in biography is a topic apart. They can displace for a time, but not replace, what the craft demands.

When a dozen years had passed, in the 1960s, the first biography went out of print; and then a great change came over my life. Partly on the strength of the book, I was invited in 1966 by Dr George Whalley to join the Department of English at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. Four years later it was he who suggested that I might "revise" it, in the light of new material. I would be eligible for research funds, and for substantial leave—unaccustomed privileges for me.

I set to work, and within a year or so I began to understand what had really happened. Because of deaths in the previous fifteen years, all the "papers", or nearly all, had become available, and very great quantities had crossed the Atlantic to North America: in Texas, the inward correspondence of Lady Ottoline Morrell, packed with references to Mansfield and Murry at Garsington; in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, the papers of Ottoline Morrell, and papers of Edward Marsh, who was part of the story too; in the British Museum, those of Ottoline's (once withheld from me) and of Katherine's (once withheld from me) letters to the *German Garden*; in Hamilton, Ontario, the archives of Bertrand Russell, who in 1916 made a pass at Katherine Mansfield (I think that describes it while also having an affair with Lady Constance Macleod, and later addressing Ottoline Morrell as "My Darling"). In every letter now in Texas (also sending descriptions of "K.M." to both of

them). Finally, and very importantly, in New Zealand there now were all the notebooks, manuscripts, and letters from K.M. herself which Murry had owned in 1950, but which I had not then seen. There were even people still living, in their eighties, who could help me, and one man in his nineties: Katherine's first husband, George Bowden, whom she had deserted for a young violinist whose letters from her, unknown to me as yet, were also in Ontario.

What had really happened, then was this. I had written one biography "too soon", with access to many personal impressions from my subject's intimate friends, but with dust in my eyes as well; in some sense a personal biography, class one, but really a reported biography, class two. And now, with access to hoards of letters and papers, including her own letters, research funds enabling me to get to them, because that is a recognized part of the academic life in North America) I was to come at



that one of her comic descriptions, very sympathetic, any kind of... described an evening spent with her and Robert Graves and Roger... in 1917; or that just about that time she gave a reading of *Princess* to the assembled guests at Garsington, within a few days of the publication. (Clive Bell reported that.) There is gossip and gossip, much of it. But in the end it is the documents that count.

Or is it? Is all the truth in them? What does one do with the following exchange of 1949 between Ida Baker (for Lesley Moore) and the woman, Lesley Moore, who was the woman who sponsored our early meetings and tried to bully Lesley into talking: "Come on Lesley, you're supposed to be one. What is it Lesley doing?" "Well, my darling, I've heard it said—they use instruments. A most revealing instrument, the telephone. And there can be no substitute for the pure form of words employed. But put it in? No, because every second-rate reviewer would seize upon it, and blow proportion all to hell. It is true that most of the letters would be, but I don't relish it. It would be the rule, I now believe; and do not give others the chance to do that thing. Let its tellings be functional, or refrain.

In 1950 I wrote to the French novelist Francis Carco, with whom K. M. had a brief affair in 1915, actually spending four illicit nights with him in the Zone des Armées where he was a military postman with the rank of corporal. To my surprise he invited me to his flat on the Quai de Béhème, filled with Murillo. Not reading English, he had never known what K. M. wrote about the episode in her journal, or that Murry had revealed it in print. "That's annoying," was his comment (not in English). "I didn't know Jack knew."

And Murry himself had not known of many things of which he first read in my first biography, for K. M. had used concealment—deceptions too—with him. And so, with Mr. Chadband: "What is 'sorrow'?" Is it what the intimates knew and saw and felt—or what the biographer finds out? Presumably, it must be constructed out of both. But in this regard, not the knowledge of the participants in the story, but the customs of the time in which the teller of it lives, the curiously accepted expectations of biography, will play a shaping part. They have greatly changed, between 1950 and 1980. The construct which results may be seen as true, but only for its time. Such a thing as "definitive biography" does not exist: because of changes in the view we take, it will always be changing.

There is another change on the way—one caused by new technology. Until about 1960 you had to be a bookworm to write biography; in fact you could be nothing but a bookworm, and write biography. From now on you will need to be a tape-recorder, or a fact-finding beast. I think—and you will be dealing in a different kind of truth. Post-Nixon biography will have different qualities.

Some people talk of oral history. I myself, having made it a rule always to go to an interview equipped with a dictating supply of facts and dates, have found people's memories far less consistently reliable, but in their personal impressions of a character, or of feelings, or even of motives. In the end, though, the proximate biographer (class one or class two), must always turn from the spoken word, the revealing gesture, the lifted eyebrow, to that authentic bit of paper with words written on it. It must, I think, class three wherever he can.

But even that may not avail if he lacks a humble attitude towards his own discoveries, and cannot bring himself to follow the advice to "investigate." The more he discovers on his own, the greater is his danger in this regard. He is bound to experience a corrupting sense of power at times: "I seem to know more about this than they did," K. M.'s unfortunate first husband George Bowden, once told me that himself, and the fact (for fact it was) had a curious consequence.

When crossing the Atlantic in 1972, knowing that I was to meet him and his wife for the first time (he was then 94; Mrs Bowden was younger), I well remember wondering, as I looked down on the iceberg from 40,000 feet, whether a visit of only five minutes to the Mediterranean home would be long enough for me to broach with Mrs

Bowden the principal question on my mind: "Have you any idea why Katherine Mansfield married Mr Bowden?" After other travels I arrived, and had been in the house about an hour. Mr Bowden was dining in the next room, a rug over his feet, in his favourite chair. Mrs Bowden, across a table from me, was toying with an ornament, when she broached it: "There's one question I've been wanting to ask you. Have you any idea why Katherine married Mr Bowden?" The whole thing broke up in a lough, we became good friends, and a little later certain papers were produced. It is the papers, now, that are in the book. Always the papers. The answer to the question itself is still no more than a guess.

Returning to those changes wrought by time in the character of accidental records, it is obvious that the telephone has eliminated all those penny letters that were once so numerous. To Lytton Strachey: "Thank you. I should love to come to you at 4.30 on Friday." To Herrand Russell: "Yes, do let us dine together on the 23rd." Those are no more. But the tapeworm of the future will hear what I could not, and would have dearly liked to know: what did Katherine sound like when he talked? How far did he change his Midlands accent? To what extent did the Colonial Katherine Mansfield sound "English" after her education lessons at Queen's College with the son of the Victorian novelist George MacDonald? Did her voice, her modified "New Zealand twang" as Murry once called it, grate on the sensibilities of Virginia Woolf and Ottoline Morrell? Future biographers will sometimes have access to this different kind of truth. And what a factor it could be!

Of all K.M.'s precarious relationships, one of the most interesting was that with Virginia Woolf. As a woman writer, they were greatly drawn to each other. There was no one else, as Virginia more than once said. But as women, they did not get on. The slow-motion battle of a couple of wary cats. This because they both were obliged to hide so much: Virginia, her madness; Katherine, her youthful follies, and the price they had expected. Two specialists in the secrets of the human heart, brought together by the strong desire to know, and understand; and they could not know each other! In time, with the face-saving movements of two cats, they draw apart. At work on Katherine's side was a loathing of Bloomsbury; on Virginia's, a fascination and recoil, from Katherine's appetite for life. The price of that included generosity, which Katherine had for eight years, without knowing, (it was in the upper tract) and she only learned the truth at a moment when Virginia was experiencing a desire to know her better, along with a puzzling sense of being avoided. One day as Virginia was leaving the house, Katherine very nearly spoke of it in fact she did so in general terms, but then held back. What Virginia's reaction might have been, she dared not learn. Three years later Virginia published *Jacob's Room*, her experiment on the theme that for human beings to know each other really is not possible. Katherine died soon after, not having read it.

Literary biography is an exercise in cutting up the artist to find out how he works—as we used to pull apart our clockwork toys. There is a queer little poem by Emily Dickinson, that other robber into secrets of the human heart, which sounds as if it treats this theme. For the last few years I have had it mentally, beside me, always, as I describe the life that I was trying to describe. It came to a certain, and in the midst of blood from Katherine's mouth, Miss Dickinson's caution to a literary biographer:

Split the Lark—and you'll find the Music—  
Ruth after Ruth, in Silver rolled—  
Scantly dealt to the Summer Morn—  
At last, at last, the secret is told—  
Saved for your Ear when Larks are old—

Launch the Flood—you shall find it patient—  
Gush after Gush, reserved for you—  
Scarlet Experiment! Scopic!—  
Now, do you doubt that your Bird—  
Has committed biography twice—  
I sometimes wonder after that, whether it ought to be allowed.

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## Burbage's building

By R. V. Holdsworth

HERBERT HERRY (Editor):  
The First Public Playhouse: The Theatre in Shoreditch, 1576-1598  
139pp. McGill-Queen's University Press, \$9.95,  
0 7735 0340 4

404 years ago a fragile partnership between a carpenter turned actor and his gracer brother-in-law produced the first modern professional playhouse. It was called, simply, The Theatre. We know much more about the legal and sometimes physical warfare that followed from this event, the squabbles over ownership of the land, renewal of the lease, and division of the profits, than we do about the building. What were the chief influences on its design? Was it round, square, or rectangular? How big was it? Was it a stage, a large platform, or one equipped with a "heavens"—a canopy and supporting pillars—as in De Witt's sketch of the Swan? This book, a collection of essays by five distinguished theatre historians, takes the first close look at these and other questions about the building of the Theatre since C. W. Wallace assembled the primary documents in 1913. It is full of new facts and new ideas, and its general theme is that what was true of the later playhouses may not have been true of the earlier ones, and we have been too ready to assume that it was.

Glynn Wickham considers whether the Theatre had a "heavens." His view is that for the first sixteen years of its history it didn't, that this was an innovation introduced by Henslowe at the Rose about 1599-91, and that Burbage probably followed suit early in 1592 when he is known to have spent about forty pounds on "further building and reparations." This is a novel suggestion, convincingly argued by reference to written and pictorial records, and by close inspection of the few bits of business

in the forty-five surviving plays of 1576-91 where pillars or other characters or properties seem to be required.

The question of what architectural tradition might have influenced the Theatre is taken up by Oscar Brownstein and Richard Hosley. Asking "Why Didn't Burbage Lease the Beargarden?" which was available at the time, Professor Brownstein demolishes the much-convoys notion that the Theatre grew out of the baiting-ring. Baiting-rings must, he shows, have accommodated their spectators quite differently, providing different sightlines and playing their yards with a great platform ten feet high to stop terror-maddened animals running amok in the audience. A bloodthirsty witness to this last feature is William Faunt, knight and gambler, who told the magistrates at the Beargarden in about 1600 that he had a one-eyed bull called Bevis who would "either throw up your dodges [sic] in the lofts, or else ding out there braynes against the grates." As it was only after the rise of the playhouse that baiting-rings became tiered amphitheatres (hence Faunt's "lofts"), influence was probably in the other direction.

An altogether more likely progenitor is proposed by Richard Hosley. After discussing in detail how far the Theatre may have resembled its successors, especially the Globe, which was built from its timbers, he points to the existence of a remarkably similar building at Catnis in 1520, built by English workmen, so that Henry VIII could provide "some goodly mummery" to entertain the Emperor Charles. Hosley notes here an English tradition of playhouse design capable of producing a "round" three-story timber building measuring 121 feet in diameter which shows that the Theatre was not, after all, "a new thing under the sun in 1576."

The remaining two essays shed important new light on the business side of the Theatre. Herbert Berry makes a considerable advance on Wallace and Chambers in the calculation of Burbage's profits, and in doing so provides some lively details of the manager's "indirect dealing," in-

cluding his use of "A secret key" to fill from "the Common box" and his habit, while dishing the takings, of slipping some of the cash "in his bosome or other where about his body." William Logan offers new facts about Henry Lanman, the owner of the neighbouring Curlew, and speculates very plausibly that by "lacking the Curlew" as an *Esore* to their playhouse, Burbage and his partner may have been an unwelcome competitor, and persuaded Lanman to sell it to them for the equivalent of seven years' income. If this is true, from 1586 to 1596 Burbage was owner and manager of two playhouses.

The book ends with an indispensable handlist of documents about the Theatre compiled by the general editor, here for the first time properly organized and catalogued. This is an enthralling body of material, and deserves to be much better known. It contains, for example, the story of the Burbages' magnificent *coup de main* in 1582 when they cut through the legal wrangling over the lease by carrying away the Theatre to the Bankside during the Christmas holidays and renaming it the Globe (thus solving the problem of whether it was still the same building). It also affords some alarming glimpses into the hazards of Elizabethan theatrical management. We hear of a "murdering ho" "from which we may infer that the Theatre had at least one outside window, and keeping 'charges' Pistoles & powder and legges" to show of Rich. J. soon to become the great actor of his age, boasting to his father's creditors with a broom staff and in the same fricas, according to one outraged witness, "scarcely & disdainfully playing wif the deponent's nose." One wonders if he recalled the incident ten years later, when, treading the boards of the Globe as Hamlet, he asked if anyone twanked his nose, or better his pate across.

Before, say, 1793 Irishmen of all sorts were, by and large, untroubled by the question "who am I?" — only arise when society does not comfortably answer it before it can be asked. While the societies depicted in Jane Austen's novels are neither so stable nor so idyllic as is sometimes suggested, it is true that she does not (as we tend to) conceive social relations to be inherently in crisis.

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## The pursuit of Hibernicity

By Oliver MacDonagh

F. S. L. LYONS:  
*Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890-1939*  
192pp. Oxford University Press, 16.95,  
0 19 822 493 1

The "culture and anarchy" of this book bear no resemblance to the office of the *Irish Times* and its editor, while dishing the takings, of slipping some of the cash "in his bosome or other where about his body." William Logan offers new facts about Henry Lanman, the owner of the neighbouring Curlew, and speculates very plausibly that by "lacking the Curlew" as an *Esore* to their playhouse, Burbage and his partner may have been an unwelcome competitor, and persuaded Lanman to sell it to them for the equivalent of seven years' income. If this is true, from 1586 to 1596 Burbage was owner and manager of two playhouses.

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One might—though this is not among the facts considered by Professor Lyons—attempt to understand the Catholic-nationalist position by finding the Irish essence in what long pre-dated its emergence, in Celticism and pre-Christian Ireland generally. One might of course also say, at *quoque*, the mass of conventional nationalists might be accused of drifting into the condition of semi-colons themselves. As Hyde put it, in his overture of 1892 to the launching of the Gaelic League, "the Irish race is at present in a most anomalous position, imitating England and yet apparently luring it. . . . It has lost all that they [the old patriots] had—language, traditions, music, genius and ideas." One might, like Yeats, attempt to make from peculiarly Irish and Anglo-Irish materials, a distinctive contribution to the literature and art of Europe, and thereby establish or confirm a fused culture, vastly superior to its elements. One might, it need scarcely be added, try to make common cause with the "native" opposition to the rise of the bourgeois in Catholic Ireland.

All of these, incidentally but portentously, also constituted efforts to supersede the traditional Irish lines of division, as well as to redefine the British-Irish conflict. Perhaps the most striking and poignant passages of all in *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland* are those which demonstrate how these efforts continually served to clarify and intensify the old antagonisms rather than heal or mollify. For the reactions to culture in Ireland seem to have been a series of syncretistic reduplications contributed materially to the rise in exclusivity and chauvinism in all parts of Ireland during 1910-39. Cultural distinctiveness could not long remain, if it ever was, apolitical; nor could it long remain apolitical. The inherent tendency of Gaelic and Catholic to converge in the popular concept of nationality could not really be restrained; and the *United Irishman* in 1903 laid its finger, as Professor Lyons puts it, on the fatal flaw in the position of the cultural syncretists.

Mr. Yeats does not give any reason why if the Irish National Theatre has now no propaganda save that of good art it should continue to call itself either Irish or National. If the Theatre be solely an Art Theatre, then its productions must be fairly criticized from the standpoint of art. But whilst it calls itself Irish National, its productions must be considered and criticized as Irish National productions.

Although de Valera eventually attained the modest distinction of being the first President of the Republic, he was a surprising number of southern Irish Protestants. Professor Lyons sees in his Constitution of 1937 the very peak of the counter-cultural wave which opposed the Anglo-Irish values, new and old. But the Professor is wrong. The Constitution, though excellently done, is a compromise between the Gaelic, Catholic, republican, pious-peasant and plain-people syndrome which had taken shape, in part, in response to the attempted ideological revolutions of 1890-1910.

A major advantage of the concentration on the Anglo-Irish, as it were, is the light which this throws upon the rival or "Gaelic" culture. Repentant Planters were very close to, but congenitally critical of, the indigenous. The mirror which they held up to nature, as it manifested itself in the complex of the Irish, composes a ghastly perspective, emphases and phenomena which escaped the nationalists themselves, not to add the English and the northern unionists—and indeed, in several important matters, the Gaelic and Catholic. They thereby shed a brilliant light upon accepted pictures. They suddenly re-arranged the relative importance of various Irish ideas, qualities and events. It is the patient pursuit of the reports and responses from the most forward groups among the doubly-alienated minority which makes

*Culture and Anarchy in Ireland* a memorable book. Apart from their intrinsic interest, the responses act as a long and idiosyncratic, but also most penetrating commentary upon the course of Irish history during a tumultuous fifty years.

Perhaps the argument is not as schematic as this review suggests, but if so it is all the more effective and reverberatory for being elusive and inferential. Not this all. The history of ideas and the history of mentalities are virtually unbroken ground in Ireland, and Professor Lyons has here pioneered in both.

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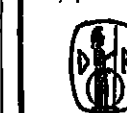
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In Plato's *Republic* an important duty of the rulers was "to supervise the production of stories, and choose only those we think suitable, rejecting the rest." Plato in his prescription to refer to children, but in the Soviet Union it is applied by the authorities to all reading matter, including that for adults. Indeed, arguably children's literature there manifests more diversity, imagination and freedom than adult's. Helen Ann O'Dell suggests a reason for this: "In a sense Soviet children are God. Soviet man does not labour for the sake of divine recognition, but to bring a better life for his children." Offering to this God cannot be drab and demystified, and it is no accident that, especially during the Stalin years, some of Russia's best writers, to keep their own imagination and integrity alive, turned to writing for children.

On the evidence of Dr O'Dell's book, the organization which goes into bringing this literature before children and helping them to read it is impressive, and here perhaps Western educationalists will feel they have something to learn. Both the Soviet Writers' Union and the Gorky Institute of Literature have special children's sections; publishing houses, journals and book centres are devoted to children's needs; and most libraries have one or more children's librarians, not only to select and purchase books, but also to guide children's reading, keeping records of each child's progress. If all this works in practice as it does on paper (and occasionally Dr O'Dell seems a little inclined to "lack of evidence, to take the word for the deed), then Western parents, teachers and librarians will be

envious. Or does it all smack rather of totalitarian mind control? Dr O'Dell's book gives grounds for supposing that it does, and that anyway in practice it is not wholly successful. She has examined primary school readers, runs of a popular children's journal (*Murzhiko*), as well as familiar stories, to find her evidence. By her account this literature aims to induce in children the qualities which will make them amenable to control: discipline, collectivism, love of work, patriotism and dedication to the building of a happy future.

It may be noted in passing that some features which one might expect to encounter in a Marxist-Leninist upbringing are missing or underplayed: internationalism, egalitarianism, even atheism. At least implicitly, in fact, is a general social morality remarkably close to a rather conservative "bourgeois" stereotype: politeness and cleanliness are prized, male and female sex roles are traditional, and Russian nationalism (as distinct from Georgian or Uzbek, say) seems to be revalued, as in the days of the "white man's burden" (from this point of view it would have been interesting to see some mention of literature from non-Russian republics). Religion in the conventional sense is absent, but there is more than a whiff of "gentle Jesus, meek and mild" in the presentation of Lenin "always with you, in joy and hope and grief"; ten-year-olds are recommended to visit the mausoleum when they are going through a difficult period of their lives, or have to take an important decision.

Often the care with which this material is devised and presented makes it effective. According to Korney Chukovsky (the most celebrated Soviet children's writer and a reliable witness), when a little Soviet girl heard one day that her father was ill to go to work, she asked "What about the Five Year Plan?" Such solicitude for the national economy suggests a positively unhealthy degree of success in socializing children. There is also a fair amount of evidence (almost any visitor to the Soviet Union could think of some) to suggest that most Soviet citizens are

more apt than westerners to subordinate their own individual goals to the needs of the collective, are more prone to accept the military aims of their government, to regard foreigners with suspicion, and so on. Yet success is far from total. Foreigners are regarded not only with suspicion, but also with fascination, as emissaries to a forbidden and enticing world. Social work and party assignments are often undertaken, not out of devotion, but from a desire to get ahead and achieve promotion. Moreover, atomic withdrawal from collective play into drunkenness, hoodlums and crime seems to be quite widespread, though shrouded in almost total secrecy broken only by occasional cautionary tales in the press. One problem may be that the educational system, with its promises of secular happiness, leads children to expect a wholly fulfilling adult life, an expectation which is bound to be sharply disappointed.

There are also internal inconsistencies in the Soviet socialization process. Dr O'Dell compares it enlighteningly with the programme of character education envisaged for secular society by the French sociologist Durkheim. Though the Soviet system does much to promote "discipline" and "attachment to social groups", which are two of Durkheim's criteria, it ignores or even undermines the third one, "autonomy", by which Durkheim meant the capacity for independent thinking or creativity, and it tends to cultivate the kind of irrational myth-making which he abhorred. Until Soviet educators have learnt to promote individuality, and also genuine science as distinct from ideological pseudo-science, they will, Dr O'Dell feels, have difficulty in establishing an integrated secular morality.

In this country, where nothing remains of the grand Victorian consensus on socialization save the compulsory weekly religious education slot in schools, educationalists sometimes recommend both better organization and more state-sponsored uniformity. Dr O'Dell's book is highly recommended, both for its positive and negative findings. Soviet everyone who is concerned about this debate.

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## The beauties of the bush

By Randolph Stow

ALISON ALEXANDER:  
Billabong's Author  
The Life of Mary Grant Bruce  
149pp. Angus and Robertson, £6.95.  
0 207 13766 8

The dust-jacket of *Billabong's Author* is modelled on those of the old Ward Lock editions of its subject's works, and the book's main appeal will be to female Australians who remember them: As it is based largely on the recollections of Mrs Bruce's loyal family, it will chatter no illusions. Mary Grant Bruce (1878-1958) emerges as a quiet and wholesome, Tory body with the ability to write, on occasions, rather well. The description in *Robin* of an approaching bushfire is very good indeed. One can understand why her acerbic Irish sister-in-law thought similar passages wasted on children.

This chunky baby comes as light relief in a biography otherwise rather even to such revelations as that Mrs Bruce "extended" at critical crosswords, and "had a great affinity for nature", demonstrated by going for walks to her brother, of his wife's most popular creations. Evelyn Bruce wrote: "The four characters have become rather dated, with four names but with no individuality, and not even a distinction of age or sex. They are a composite photograph made up of so much love of horses and much skill in household chores, a touch of superstition so as always to come out top (the), and a big dash of Strong Silent Englishman to give ballast to the whole."

The four in question are David Linton, strong silent owner of a station called Billabong in Edwardian Victoria, his motherless daughter, Norah, and her two sons, Jim and Wally. And Evelyn Bruce's estimate

of them is just enough, though they are so extremely harmless that justice might have been tempered with mercy. But then, she was not an Australian. For a great many Australian readers most of them girls, but boys and grown men also wrote (four letters) the characters in the "Billabong books" represented what they hoped themselves to be. The peregrinations of Jim and Wally, a bit wearisome if examined out of context, spread a vague haze of good humour, and everyone was very decent, cheerful, loyal, brave, resourceful and free of urban vices. The books reinforced an existing predisposition to regard the bush as the real Australia, and the countryman as the real Australian. In one of the world's most urbanized nations this view still has support.

Mary Grant Bruce herself knew bush life as a visitor rather than as a year-round bushwoman. Her father, an Irish land surveyor from an Ascendancy family in reduced circumstances, lived modestly in country towns. Her mother's family, however, belonged to the Gipsyland "aristocracy", and her descriptions of station life, which good judges praised, were inspired by holidays spent with her grand parents in the bush. At twenty she went to Melbourne and became a journalist, working mainly on a children's page, for which she wrote short fiction. Some favourite characters kept reappearing, and without planning it she wrote a serial, which turned into *A Little Bush Maid*, published in London in 1910.

This had considerable success in Australia, as did two further Billabong books which followed, and in 1913 she was able to make her first trip abroad. In Ireland, visiting her father's brothers, she met Major George Bruce, a second cousin. She was thirty-five and he eleven years older, but they suited one another and decided to marry. During the Great War Major Bruce, slightly disabled in South Africa, served in Ireland, North and South. In the Billabong books the Lintons and the Bruces followed their creator's move-

ments (though Jim and Wally were, of course, at the front much of the time), sharing her opinions of the quaint Irish and the stiff English, and at last thankfully returning to the greater reality of Gipsyland.

The Bruces, now with two sons, also made that journey, and stayed for eight years, but for the rest of their lives were rather nomadic. In 1927 they settled in Ulster, where two years later they lost their younger son, aged twelve, in an accident with a shotgun. When Mary was seven her favourite brother had died in a similar accident. Both parents were shattered, and began afterwards to show an interest in the occult, of which Alison Alexander finds some signs in the later books, though MGB remained a conventional Anglican and the least cranky of ladies.

After spending the depressed 1930s uncomfortably in England, they returned in 1939 to Australia, where Mary made patriotic broadcasts, sold her autograph to raise money for the Red Cross, wrote her last book (*Billabong Riders*, 1942) and was, again, faced. Following her husband's death in 1949 she shuffled regularly between Melbourne and London, and died at Bexhill, aged eighty, in 1958. She was an aged Australian of an uncomplicated type, and remains one of the public persona of Sir Robert Menzies.

Her biographer reports that her novels, after fading from view in the late 1960s and early 1970s, are now making a comeback. New readers of the 1980s may find certain things about them rather odd, such as that the characters rarely say anything (except, perhaps, *loftily*), preferring to report, *expostulate* or *staccato*. But they will probably survive, for the reason which Mrs Alexander gives so sensibly: "For those who want to look back to an older time, and see what Australians thought of themselves fifty years ago, there is no better picture of the ideal or legend of rural Australia than that given by the Billabong books."